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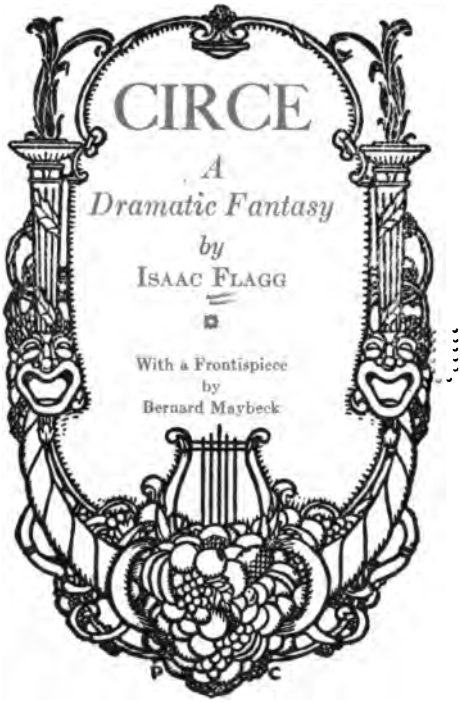
CIRCE
A
Dramatic Fantasy
by
ISAAC FLAGG
With a Frontispiece
by
Bernard Maybeck

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To

MABEL LAMMÉ HAYS

Rarest of enchantment deem
The beginning and the end:
At life's morning in the dream,
At life's evening in the friend.

Mrs. Rand Hays 11-13-19

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THE ARGUMENT

OMER relates that Ulysses, king of Ithaca in Greece, sailing homeward after the capture of Troy, drifted into unknown seas in consequence of the wrath of Neptune; and after losing all but one of his twelve ships, landed with the sole remaining vessel upon the island of the enchantress Circe, who transformed one-half of his ship's company, twenty-two in number, into swine. He relates further that Ulysses, apprised by Mercury of the fate of his companions, and furnished by the god with an antidote for the spells of the sorceress, compelled her to restore his men to their human shape. Thereupon, at the invitation of Circe the rest of the crew join their mates at her palace, where all spend a year in festivity and merry-making before proceeding on their way with precise instructions from the Enchantress regarding the homeward voyage.

The experiences of Ulysses and his followers, as described in the Odyssey, immediately previous to their arrival at the Isle of Circe, had been of an extraordinary and alarming character. A number of men had been devoured by Polyphemus the Cyclops in his cave, where he had entrapped a party, the survivors escaping by riding out, clasped under the bellies of his sheep, after they had made the monster drunk and blinded his one eye with a fiery stake. Later, they came to the domain of Æolus, king of the winds, who

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presented Ulysses with a number of bags holding the adverse winds in confinement. But during the sleep of their commander, when already near their native shore, some of the men through curiosity untying the bags, the winds broke loose and swept them back to Æolus, who drove them all forth with contempt. They next encountered the Læstrygones, a race of man-eating giants. Being shown the way to the town by a daughter of the giant king, some men were seized and devoured on the spot; while from an attack made upon the ships collected in the harbor only one vessel succeeded in escaping.

No mention is made of Penelope, the wife of Ulysses, at any point in the story of Circe; but we read that Ulysses lingered in the enchanted island, until his men were finally compelled, seizing an opportunity when Circe was away, to remonstrate with their chief and rouse him to thoughts of a return to his home.

Homer says that the attendants of the Enchantress in her palace were nymphs, such as derive their being from the fountains, the groves, and the rivers flowing to the sea.

The First Act of the play brings Ulysses and his companions into Circe's palace; the Second Act takes them out of it.

CIRCE

A

Dramatic Fantasy

PERSONS REPRESENTED

CIRCE, the Enchantress

PHILINNA, THERMIA, MYRTO } Nymphs, companions and attendants to Circe

THRATTIS, the lute-girl

GRAEA, the dumb swine-maiden

Other nymphs attending Circe

MIKKOS, an ape

ULYSSES, a Commander

EURYLOCHUS, his mate

THERON, the ship's cook

ELPENOR, a feeble-minded youth, the cook's assistant

GLAUCUS, PHORBAS, PHILEMON, XENIAS } Sailors

Other members of Ulysses' ship's-company

MERCURY, Messenger of the Immortals and Luck-bringer to men

THE PLACE: *A small woody island, inhabited only by the Enchantress and her Nymphs, who dwell in a palace at the centre and summit of the isle.*

ACT ONE

I

A PRELIMINARY scene of mute action. The front of CIRCE's palace at the hour just after sunset. The edifice is of variously tinted stone, a combination of several architectural masses. The windows of the building are tall and very narrow, overshadowed with creeping plants. Its main entrance, at the Left of the Centre, is from a massive porch with gargoyles of serpents at the corners of its roof. The porch is reached by a flight of wide, low steps; the doorway itself, low and wide, deeply receding and darkened by the ample foliage of overhanging vines. The palace faces eastward upon a smooth open court-yard enclosed by a wall of stone with spacious gateway at the Right. The entrance to the court at the Left corner of the building is inconspicuous. At the main gateway there is artificial representation of wolves and leopards as if tame and serving as watchdogs. Behind the court-yard wall rise large trees throwing deep shadows in the twilight. A fountain, dragon-shaped, with circular basin, is centrally placed in the court, that is just at the Right of the porch steps.

As the curtain rises, a humming sound as of a swiftly turned spinning-wheel is heard behind the scenes; and

presently the music of CIRCE's song (the words of which are sung in a later Scene) is played upon flute and violin. The fountain is playing, and its spray, rising and falling intermittently, gleams with a golden light, occasionally changing to a faint blue, and then becoming golden again. Some of the serpentine gargoyles are seen to sway and writhe like living snakes. A large *ape* emerges from a small window above the porch, stands upon its roof at first erect like a man, then poses upon all fours at the edge, trying to look underneath into the doorway, and remains in this position. A glimpse also is caught of the *Swine-maiden*, a tall, gaunt, witch-like figure robed in gray, trailing behind her a very long cowhide whip. Appearing suddenly from some place of concealment she passes furtively and silently, with long strides, across the Left corner and disappears behind the palace.

II

Interior. The banquet-hall of CIRCE's palace. A long, low apartment, clearly but not brilliantly illuminated by torch-wood burning upon cressets in the rear, Right and Left. The walls and ceiling of the room are of neutral tint, light shades, but nowhere white; the decorations, of simple Grecian type. Two wide entrances at the rear afford glimpses of a back corridor dimly lighted; between these doors a large spinning-wheel of fantastic pattern stands near the wall. On the Right a curtained opening leads to the boudoir of CIRCE; and another door is situated further back on this side. On the Left, directly opposite the boudoir, is an entrance from an alcove or passage-way communicating with the porch;

in front of it a dais or platform, raised one step higher than the floor of the apartment. Near another door far back on the Left stands a large sideboard or buffet showing the usual garniture. Between the boudoir and the dais, thus centrally placed but a little forward, are two large, low tables nearly square, standing end to end, but far enough apart to allow free passage between them, and showing clearly the spinning-wheel behind. Three tall armchairs or thrones stand, one at the end of the table on the Left, in front of the dais; another at the opposite end of the other table, by the entrance of the boudoir; the third at the left hand of the second throne, behind the table. There are numerous other small Greek chairs without backs. Each table is spread with a light brown cloth. Upon the table at the Right are several pieces of plate and a low spreading vase of flowers near its centre; a flagon and goblets upon the other table. As the curtain rises the music ceases, but the humming of the wheel is continued. CIRCE is seen seated upon the throne at the head of the table by her boudoir. Her slender golden wand is carelessly thrown upon the table before her. Her black robe she has pushed away from her shoulders over the back of her chair; but she wears her coronal of pearls confining massy black hair, with long, light, pearly veil depending from the diadem behind. Her tunic is of canary-colored silk; she wears crimson sandals, and a golden serpent bracelet encircles her left wrist.

PHILINNA, a blonde, of beauty comparable to that of CIRCE herself, but of the opposite type, in dress and in all other respects forming a contrast to the Enchantress, stands behind the throne at her mistress' left hand.

THE FIRST ACT

The place of THERMIA, a nymph of elegant figure and winsome expression, is behind the table on the Left, near the throne at its head by the dais.

MYRTO, who has dark hair like CIRCE, but is of small stature and not marked by especial beauty, sits facing the Enchantress by the spinning-wheel, which, as she swiftly turns it, gives forth the melodious hum that fills the air when the curtain rises.

The predominant color of PHILINNA'S dress is mauve; of THERMIA'S, azure; of MYRTO'S, dark green. Other nymphs are drest in light gauzy material, never pure white. All wear Grecian costume.

As CIRCE *turns toward her with a slight gesture,* MYRTO *stops the wheel.*

CIRCE

Hush, Myrto; prithee stay
Thy busy wheel awhile; I fain would listen
To the mere silence—if that be silence, when
Naught save the light-wing'd evening zephyr breathes
His soft sea-voices through the piny boughs
And the broad vine-leaf tinkles at the porch.
No footfalls patter now; our thirsty questioners,
After the sunset shadow falls, come not.
Truly 't were vain, save by the day's bright beam,
To seek my mansion on this bowery summit

Through tangled briery paths and copse-wood dim—
For the first time.

PHILINNA

Thou knowest well, dear lady,
No second coming, save in four-footed guise,
Thy hand vouchsafes them.

CIRCE

Ay, not twice the cup
For the same drinker need we pour.—And, Myrto,
Remembered'st thou to cull the herbs I named,
Wolf's-bane and hemlock and the rest?

MYRTO

Yes, lady.

CIRCE

And stored and sorted all?

MYRTO

By the full moon
Each kind I pluck'd; then, crosswise laid, I dried them

On the black adder-stone what hour no cloud
The noonday welkin streak'd.

CIRCE

'T is well. Right soon
I shall bruise more and brew their potions.
[*After a brief pause*] Ah!
Myrto; hast thou aught seen this season yet
Of *moly* plant?

MYRTO

No sprig, since we dug forth
Those three and to their root put fire.

PHILINNA

O Circe,
What mortal can know moly? or, if found,
Might guess that straightening salutary force
Which its pale blossom suckles?

CIRCE

Little indeed
Know they or seem to reck, who find my door,

By the four winds or vague desire impell'd.
Not of the herbs alone, wherewith I work
Transforming magic, and of their antidotes
Is saving knowledge to human sense denied;
But the mere man in equal measure lacks
Perception of all that inner occult domain
Which on my mystic vision rises clear
And blends harmonious with material scenes.
Therefore, what mortals know I know more surely,
Crowning their wisdom with profounder lore.
How oft do they who come, while at this board
They swill and gloat, ere yet the damning cup
I proffer, boast large deeds and prate of what
They call *experience*—in the same breath imploring
Guidance, which I with gracious hand might lend,
Seem'd they but worthy. [PHILINNA *nods assent.*]

THERMIA

Stands some one, Circe,
At the porch door.

CIRCE

Throw open; no mortal visitor
Descends so deftly on us.

THE FIRST ACT

[*The door at the Left is opened by* THERMIA, *showing a golden-gleaming light in the passage-way behind it. Immediately* MERCURY *enters, standing as he first speaks upon the dais. His winged serpent-twined wand is brilliant with inlaid mother-of-pearl. Dewdrops glisten upon the wings of his cap and sandals. The mutual demeanor of* MERCURY *and* CIRCE *is friendly, but not familiar. Neither makes show of deference toward the other.* MERCURY *does not remove his cap. He takes no notice whatever of the nymphs.*]

MERCURY

All-potent Circe,
Hail!

CIRCE

Hail to thee, sir messenger! Be welcome;
Tarry and taste our cheer.

[MERCURY *seats himself upon the throne at the head of the table near which he stands.* THERMIA *takes his wand and lays it upon the table.*]

CIRCE

The nectar, Thermia.

[THERMIA *serves him from the sideboard and remains standing in attendance.*]

Bring'st from the Olympian conclave, Mercury,
Tidings to us?

MERCURY

Nay, nay ; I do but pause
On my mid-errand's flight a restful moment
At thy fair island-dome. Weary sometime
Falls even the airy stride of winged feet,
When at a stern omnipotent behest
They spurn the mountain's serried brow, plunge down,
Skimming innumerable waves, and ride
From land to land the brindled ocean's back.
But, Mistress Circe, this enchanted isle,
Topp'd by thy mansion, doth like a stepping-stone
Betwixt the shores of dawn and vesper lie,
At the convergent centre of all streams.
What roving bark shall miss it?

CIRCE

Sooner or later
'T is true each wanderer this way passes ; nor,
Our gate once spied and hospitable song
Heard trilling, turns he back.

MERCURY

I am reminded,
Whereof I once made mention, again to speak.
Fail not to pour thy strongest draught, fair Circe,
When sage *Ulysses* heeds the languorous strain.

CIRCE

So said'st thou; I recall it. And some potions
Do stronger flow an hundred-fold than others.

MERCURY

Even so one human counsel another o'er-tops
By infinite measure.—But 't is time to speed
And set a finish on this world-spanning errand.

[THERMIA *hands* MERCURY *his wand as he rises from the throne and steps upon the dais.*]

Now for the star-strewn roadways of the sky,
By the dun cloud-edge, where fork'd lightnings fly.
Farewell!

CIRCE

Farewell, sir messenger! [*Exit* MERCURY.]

PHILINNA

[*After a pause*] Dear lady Circe,
Wherefore for us at eve dost thou ne'er lift

Thy voice in sweetest song, like that whose spell
Binds the doom'd callers at the moaning porch?
So might we taste the charm and spare the bane.

CIRCE

O sit, Philinna, and mark you!

[PHILINNA *seats herself in the throne near* CIRCE. *At the same time* THERMIA *takes her seat upon one of the chairs at the other table, resting her left arm on the table.*]

CIRCE

'T is not at will those tuneful notes upwelling
Burst from this bosom's prison, when once the joy
Of fierce enslaving mastery sets them free.
I see not his approach who draweth nigh,
Like the limed bird in cruel toils to stick,
And whom the poison'd chalice straight transforms
To brutal shape:—I do not see them come;
But by a sudden thrill inspired to sing,
With a strange consciousness of quicken'd power,
Then *know* I, and need not look.—Hath e'er one song
Fail'd of response, Philinna?

THE FIRST ACT

THERMIA

Not one; O, never!

MYRTO

How could it otherwise befall?

CIRCE

There be
Others in whom by native hap are planted
Some powers of vulgar sorcery: whom it profits
On magic wheel to lash the skewer'd wryneck;
Who their unlovely droning measures vaunt
To burst the clammy serpent in the mead,
Or from her seat pull down the horned moon.
But to their sordid craft my arts compare
As sunbeams to a sputtering pitchy torch.
When *we* the human prowler quell and tame,
We work illumination!

PHILINNA

Yet sometimes
They shine with princely mien. Even as Mercury
In face and stature were those two comely youths
Thou once didst change to wolves.

CIRCE

'T was their true shape!
The godlike figure hath to mankind been lent,
Which they abuse to cloak an inner core
Of bestial motive. Therefore it is to scatter
Light over darkness, when my cunning drugs
Make the shell match the kernel. No longer then,
Once the true emblem on his visage stamp'd,
Doth the pretender with mock daring flourish:
Unmask'd, he slinks and cowers.—The most, indeed,
Are of mere swinish habit; and for them
The pointed snout suffices and rough hide.
But some—[*With mock seriousness*] Thou dream'st not, sweet Philinna,
How cruelly those same youths, but for my spell,
Had rent us both!

MYRTO

[*Gravely*] Ay, true; didst thou not mark,
Philinna, what hungry looks they bent upon
The lady Circe, even while they drank? 'T was not
The fragrant wine-cup drew them, but o'er its rim
Her neck they scann'd and watch'd the hand and arm

That reach'd the potion. So had they gazed on thee,
If Circe sat not by.

PHILINNA

Ah, Myrto; how
Could I the right herb choose and guide the beaker?
Or wield the magic wand!

THERMIA

[*Holding up her hands*] O simple, simple!

CIRCE

[*Warmly*] Thy beauty and my love for thee, Philinna,
Are of a piece; both do transcend the limit
Of usual quality. For, without thee, I
Should seem to hover in a stale vacant world;
Whilst thou, arm'd with no wand or secret drug,
Unconscious and unskill'd, canst oft divert
The most admiring, ardent, rapt regards
Away from the famed Circe—deem'd forsooth
To win by her sheer woman's charm not less
Than by shrewd arts. It is perchance the reason
Why thou art dear, because no studied guile

Can in thy breast find lodgement. Oft we crave
That in a friend which our own temper lacks;
And the two mingle to a more perfect being
Than either by itself.

[*Laying her left hand upon* PHILINNA'S *right arm*]

'T is pure simplicity
Framed as a smiling goddess at my elbow.

MYRTO

[*Gravely*] Dear lady Circe, may the gods preserve her,
Shouldst thou in turn e'er fail at her right hand
To sit with guardian thoughts.

THERMIA

Nay, Myrto!
Stand we not all in like need of that shelter
And sweet assurement which no other hand
Than Circe's can dispense? 'T is the good spell
Her bright superior spirit weaves round us, lends
Fragrance and bloom to our sequester'd lives.
What, but for that enrichment, would import
Fair skies and shady bowers?—But these mock dangers

Are but the flounce and garnish of our pastime.
Your mighty men I find more vain than valiant.
Didst thou fear Mikkos, Myrto, in his former,
Native habiliment?

MYRTO

[*Laughing*] O Thermia, he was terrible!

THERMIA

And that sleek scrivener, who serves now as one
Of our gate leopards—was it a peril when he,
Before his lips touch'd the transforming potion,
Offer'd me marriage?

PHILINNA

But what *is* marriage, Thermia?

THERMIA

It is as if a clever craftsman built
A cage round Circe and yourself, then lock'd
Its door upon you both and flung the key
Under the fountain.

PHILINNA

[*Springing from her chair and drawing back behind it*]

Holy Diana!
I should break out and fly like Circe's peacock
Into the beech-tree by the spring.

CIRCE

[*Laughing*] O children, children!
How will ye all most learnedly discourse,
Where ye know least? There lurks indeed small peril
To your fair persons, but the danger hits
Your unsophisticated silly souls.
Some men there be, whose fervid, flattering words
Would fluster and bedazzle you, till all
This tranquil sweet companionship should vanish,
As the light puffy thistle-down dispell'd,
Leaving a weary lone unrest behind it.
It is my swift preventing magic catches
And tangles their approach. We are too quick
For them; nor shall they soon outspeed us.—Yet
My brother, the great magician, told me once,
That if a drug e'er fail'd me and work'd not
For any cause its proper due effects,
Then we stood liable to some counter-spell
Of similar assignment. And he cited
My cousin Medea's strange unhappy story.

[*To* PHILINNA, *playfully*] So;
When the poor Circe faints, Philinna, thou
Wouldst fly off and desert her?

PHILINNA

O no! not
Without the cage.

CIRCE

[*Laughing*] No; I am sure
Whate'er befalls, Philinna will be faithful.

THERMIA

[*Seriously*] She will indeed, my lady!

CIRCE

Of faith and love there is no dearth among us,
Though scant occasion offer which might put
A true friend's temper to the test. For here
The spirit of petty jangling sits aloof
And common pastime smooths the tripping hours.
Its spice is in the hazard. It were indeed
A dull domain on Circe's isle, flow'd not
The petulant human throng up to our door.
For fail'd we to suppress them, we ourselves
Might share that wearisome slow life which men

Owe to their fleeting, vain, unsteady loves.
O verily they should thank us!

[CIRCE *leans back in her chair, playing with the wand that lies on the table. Then straightening up and looking across the room she claps her hands twice. Directly the lute-girl* THRATTIS *enters at the Left corner. She stands leaning against the sideboard and strikes chords upon her instrument as prelude.*]

MYRTO

O Circe, may Mikkos dance to-night?

CIRCE

Yes, child.—Poor Mikkos! His dancing days were over
When first he sought us and became our patient.
Now they begin anew.

[*She signs to* THRATTIS, *who begins a dancing tune. Other music is heard in accord with the lute.* PHILINNA *and* THERMIA *dance, not as partners, but singly, with Grecian or Turkish movement, passing round alternately between the tables and in front and behind them.* CIRCE *leans back and looks on with evident pleasure, beating time informally with her*

wand. Immediately when the dancing begins, MYRTO *runs out at the Right centre for* Mikkos; *but at the same time* Mikkos *darts in at the Left centre, drops into* MYRTO'S *seat, and begins to turn her wheel. The ape wears a handsome collar with about four feet of light brass chain hanging from it.* MYRTO *follows laughing, seizes the chain, and pulling* Mikkos *to his feet the girl and the ape dance, confining themselves to the back part of the room.* MYRTO'S *dancing is similar to that of the other two nymphs, except that she does not display the same arm movements.* Mikkos *dances only as an ordinary trained simian might succeed in doing. Next,* GRAEA *the swine-maiden enters at the Right centre and joins in the performance. Her dancing, which she confines to the corner of the room opposite* THRATTIS, *consists in snaky, gyratory movements, stooping and with long steps trailing her great whip slowly in circles upon the floor.—Presently* CIRCE, *drawing her black robe over her shoulders, still holding the wand, rises from her throne. The music ceases.* THRATTIS, Mikkos, *and* GRAEA *disappear, and the three nymphs come to a standstill at about their usual places in the room.*

CIRCE

CIRCE

[*To her nymphs*] Thus merry our lives, through the whole endless round
Of blithe days and the placid restful nights
That top their radiance. How ye are blest, forsooth
Ye cannot know, because that bliss transcends
All ken and inquisition. It is some part
Of the vast natural world instill'd and moulded
In your fair forms divine, whereto small fleck
Of human taint hath fallen; but an ethereal
Kinship of cloud and fountain and wild wood
Thrills the translucent ichor in your veins.
O sweet immortal sisterhood!

THERMIA

A mighty willow guards the meadow's brink,
Where daisies shine and finches pause to drink:
Each year its lissome branches droop anew,
And on the straightest, smoothest shoot I grew.

MYRTO

Deep in the forest shade black water ran:
Beneath its tide my babyhood began;
And while for strength these tiny knees did lack,
A bullfrog bore me on his bright green back.

PHILINNA

Down a sheer sunny cliff wild waters whirl
In tinted gleams of amethyst and pearl:
And where that dangling riband dots the sky,
From one soft gauzy filament sprang I.

[*The curtains of* CIRCE'S *bower are drawn away, revealing some part of its interior and a nymph standing on either side.* CIRCE *moves slowly backward to the bower entrance; and her three nymphs move backward toward the several exits.*]

CIRCE

[*To the audience*] There is a sleep that hath no need of dreams:
When of each waking hour the passage seems
A bird-flight under lovelier skies than those
Which dreamland fancy to the slumberer shows.

[*The music of* CIRCE'S *song is again heard, and the drop-curtain falls while all are just disappearing.* PHILINNA *goes out at Right 2;* THERMIA *at Left 2;* MYRTO *at Left centre.*]

III

A camp by the seashore just before sunrise. The ground rises at the back and Right, rough with shrubbery and rocks. A galley of antique build has been drawn upon the sand crosswise at the Left and there are glimpses of the sea on this side. The mast has been unstepped and a few long oars lean against the side of the vessel. There are other signs of a recent disembarcation. Articles of nautical and warlike use lie on the ground or hang upon bushes and rocks; wine-jars, cups, plates, etc. have been deposited. The forms of a numerous company of men are seen sleeping on the ground, wrapped in their blankets, here and there near the ship.— In the foreground at the Right centre a fire of small sticks is beginning to burn under tripod and kettle. THERON, the cook, is seen seated on the ground near the fire, washing strips of meat for roasting. From the low branch of a tree near him hangs the well stripped carcass of a deer, the hide and the head bearing large antlers in full view near by. ELPENOR, the cook's helper, is at work trying to make the fire burn.

THERON

Scratch together another stick or two of wood, youngster.

[*Enter* GLAUCUS *at Right with a jar of water which he sets down near* THERON.]

That will do for water, Glauc. Take a hand now and help the lad blow the fire a bit.

GLAUCUS

So I will, though I be a trifle blown myself, tramping up and down to that spring.

THERON

That 's where the commander pinked the deer yesterday, eh?

GLAUCUS

Ay, ay ; the old man has n't forgotten how to let slip an arrow since we became water-dogs, for certain.

THERON

'T was a crack piece of venison he fetched in and no mistake ! There 's a strip or two left for breakfast ; but I reckon we 'll have to make a soup of the hide for dinner—that is if other game does n't turn up. [*He lays pieces of meat spitted over the coals.*]

GLAUCUS

The soup 'll do them. They took solid meat enough aboard yesterday to last for a week's voyage.

ELPENOR

When I saw them eating, it made me think of father feeding the hogs up in Cephallenia.

GLAUCUS

They 're grunting yet. Just hear the beggars snore ! And we turned in before sunset too.

THERON

The Pramnian 's responsible for that : we tapped four jars. It 's the same as keeled over that beastly hulk of a Cyclops.

ELPENOR

The commander took a mighty round swig himself ; I saw him.

GLAUCUS

Trust him for keeping his head level. Besides, he can carry more of the rosy than any three of us.

THERON

Pass over those barley spats, boy—ah ! you 've got them too wet, you monkey.— Say, Glauc, how would you like to see such a thing as a woman again, eh? [THERON *grins and nudges* GLAUCUS' *knee with his elbow.*]

GLAUCUS

Well, you 're right; it is a long time since.

ELPENOR

Was n't that a woman you saw at the last landing-place?—there where they smashed all the ships we had but this one.

THERON

What!—the giant's daughter? Bless you, boy, that was a waddling mountain, not a woman!

GLAUCUS

You might throw your arms round her waist twice, Elpy, and never touch the tips of your fingers.

THERON

By the powers, she *was* a hogshead to tackle; ha, ha!

GLAUCUS

If there be female inhabitants of this prickly country, it 's to be hoped they 're not built after that pattern. But everything here wears horns, so far. [*He taps the antlers of the stag.*]

THERON

Well, we 're nigh about ready. Set those plates round in just a little order. Call 'em up, Elp ! Take my knife here and hammer on that shield hanging by the tree. The sun 'll be on us shortly. One more jar of water, Glaucus. [*Exit* GLAUCUS.]

ELPENOR

[*Pounding on the metallic shield*] Ding, dong ! Cling, clang ! Breakfast ! Get up ! Get up ! Breakfast ! Ding, dong ! Cling, clang !

[*The men rise one after another from their beds on the ground and adjust their garments, which look stained and weather-worn.* GLAUCUS *re-enters and pours water into several basins for the men to wash their hands. They gradually find seats on the ground near the fire and begin to eat, the cook and his assistant serving them informally. The conversation begins while they are dressing and getting ready, before they sit.*]

PHORBAS

[*Looking around him suspiciously*] I wonder on which side the sun rises in this blessed country.

PHILEMON

On the east side, maybe; leastwise it ought to come up opposite to where it went down yesterday.

PHORBAS

Well, who remembers where that was? Split me if I do!

GLAUCUS

Avast there! the sun 'll peep over in a jiffy—by the spring yonder. [*He turns his thumb backward to the Right.*]

PHORBAS

All the same we don't any of us know where we are.

THERON

We 're supposed to be at the breakfast table now, lads. Fall to if you 've got any appetite left over from yesterday!

XENIAS

We 've got more appetite left over than you have chops, cook.

THERON

Ay, every chop 's a spareribthis morning—except a few choice cuts here for the commander and the mate. They 're done now.

[*He takes the meat from the fire into a platter.*]

Here, young man ; take 'em over to him round the other side of the ship.

ELPENOR

[*As he goes out*] We 're going to have soup for dinner. [*He disappears behind the vessel.*]

PHILEMON

Look here, Theron ; did you put the charcoal in these barley cakes before baking or after?

GLAUCUS

Pooh, pooh ! Never mind the grit, man ; it 's an aid to digestion. We 're lucky enough to have groats aboard, anyway.

PHORBAS

We 're lucky to be alive ! By Apollo, how I shiver when I think of that Æolian duffer and the cursed wind-bags he palmed off on us !

THE FIRST ACT

XENIAS

'T was worse than a hurricane on the wrong quarter when *they* blew up—took us straight back to the old boy himself.

PHILEMON

He *was* a windy humbug! You 'd have thought, to hear him talk, we 'd be back home in Ithaca inside of twenty-four hours.

PHORBAS

And now we 're only *here!* Another cannibal island, I 'll bet my pile! Ye gods! I would n't go up ten rods from the shore for a gold mine.

THERON

Well, the commander took a little walk yesterday and nobody ate *him* up. He did n't make much of a report as to what he saw; but I 've a notion he 'll say something about it to-day.

GLAUCUS

Sh— here he comes now! Mind your taps, men!

[*Enter* ULYSSES *and* EURYLOCHUS *at the Left from behind the ship. The men finishing their meal salute without rising and arrange themselves comfortably and informally on the ground in a sort of circle looking toward* ULYSSES *in the centre.* ELPENOR *re-enters behind the two and sits down with the others.* EURYLOCHUS *also seats himself upon the ground at the right hand of* ULYSSES. *In appearance the mate is distinguished from the crew mainly by wearing fresher and less weather-beaten garments.* ULYSSES *wears a helmet and carries his sword and baldric in his hand. He throws the weapon upon the ground, and as he begins to speak takes off his helmet, holding it swinging by its strap in his left hand while he stands and speaks. The rays of the rising sun now strike over the bank behind him.*]

ULYSSES

Good morrow, men ! How sped the night?

SEVERAL VOICES

O, hearty, hearty !

EURYLOCHUS

They had a bout to sleep on, you remember, sir.

ULYSSES

That was high festival—too rare a hap!
'T was sipping of the rest ye needed sore;
But now there 's toil in prospect.

PHILEMON

We thought you might tell us, sir, what the prospect showed when you stepped out yesterday and got the deer.

PHORBAS

We 're hoping to sail away from here directly.

ULYSSES

Of sail and oar appears an end not yet,
Brave comrades,—ye sad fortune-favor'd few,
Poor relic of that once gallant troop which sat
High on three-hundred thwarts; when each proud keel,
Cleaving a homeward furrow, swept gaily past
Familiar beacons; and from known crag and scaur

Triumphal friendly greetings echoed loud,
That drop like honey in victorious ears.
Not long their cadence linger'd; but ye know
What flouts of whirlwind and black sulphurous cloud,
Wreck-witness'd warrants of Neptunian ire,
Whelm'd some with death and the scant remnant usher'd
Into these strange, uncanny, nameless seas.
And now from wave to wave your weary arms
Drive the lone pinnace, this frail shell of hope,
With mingled dread and homesick yearning freighted.

[*As* ULYSSES *pauses, some of the men, all of whom are looking to him intently, shake their heads or rock themselves to and fro, and faint groans are heard.*]

But cheer, brave shipmates; cheer!
Not boundless stretch these watery wastes, but still
Shines somewhere a vine-clad slope and pebbly cove,
The fair home-harbor pictured in your dreams.

[*The men give utterance to loud sighs and groans.*]

Somewhere it sparkles yet; but whether a ray
Of yonder climbing sun illumed its borders
Ere he warm'd us, or by the western rim
Of darkling eve our cherish'd haven lies,
We know not. In ourselves, thus mazed and wilder'd
By circular driftings and strange gruesome sights,
There springs no source of judgment, whence to draw
Some pilotage and index of true course.
Yet on these wild inhospitable shores
Beings we have encounter'd—and not all
Of baleful or ungracious mood—who hold
Rare store of guiding knowledge.—Should we not
Press with glad feet even now our native soil,
If ye, unhappy men, had spared to loose
The contrary winds great Æolus did tie down
To assure our safety?

[*The men manifest great perturbation; some gesticulating and shaking their heads; others rising to their knees and striking themselves. Mutterings and faint outcries escape them.*]

EURYLOCHUS

[*Timidly; rising to his feet*] You failed to tell them, sir, what was in the bags.

ULYSSES

[*Sternly*] I fail'd first to remember
What slender stock of prudence or just restraint
Your wits preserve. So, while I slept, ye wrought
Mischief beyond repair. It was thy watch,
Eurylochus; dost recall it?

EURYLOCHUS

Yes, sir, it was my company on duty then.

ULYSSES

Draw off thy men; let them assemble apart.

[*At a sign from* EURYLOCHUS *men to the number of one-half the crew arise and group themselves around him on the Right. The rest remain seated nearer* ULYSSES. EURYLOCHUS' *company includes* GLAUCUS, THERON, ELPENOR, *and* PHORBAS.]

ULYSSES

[*To all as before*] I repeat, then,
There dwell in these weird regions spirits—some few,
Mighty yet not malevolent, and endued
With sapient skill and far discernment. Nor
Save by experience of them may we hope

To win the instructions craved. Here yesterday
From the bare peak whereto I clomb, the view
Of a round isle lay open; and at the point
Where these upwinding brambly folds converge
I saw faint-coiling smoke-wreaths, the sure sign
Of dwellers.

[*All of the men are visibly disturbed and give increased and anxious attention.*]

It behooves us now to prove
Their case and disposition. But whether it suits
Rather that I conduct my party thither
For the grave query, or Eurylochus his,
Allotment shall decide.

[*Sensation among his hearers*]

Ofttimes the hand
Of Fortune guides a venturous essay fitter
Than human arbitration. Mark, then, Eurylochus,
My lot and thine.

[EURYLOCHUS *with assistance from others finds upon the beach two small flat stones. These he scratches with his dagger, marking one with a V, the other with an E.*]

Shake now the sherds, good Glaucus.

[*As he speaks* ULYSSES *passes the helmet which he has hitherto held in his left hand to* GLAUCUS. *The two lots are thrown into the helmet; and* GLAUCUS, *standing in an open space and watched with intense expectation by all present, shakes it violently with a circular movement until one of the lots flies out and falls to the ground. The men strain their eyes toward the stone as it is picked up by* GLAUCUS.]

ULYSSES

Well, what decision?

GLAUCUS

[*Holding up the stone*] It's Eurylochus, sir, his mark.

[*The announcement produces various effects upon the men. The party of* ULYSSES, *seated upon the ground, strive not to show too plainly their sense of relief; while the standing company of* EURYLOCHUS *are more openly affected.* PHORBAS *in particular is in a highly nervous state, glancing now toward the hill, now toward the water. A few other timid ones in the same party demean themselves similarly.*]

ULYSSES

[*To* EURYLOCHUS] Enough; make ready directly, and proceed with reasonable haste.

[*The mate's company move apart and make preparations, helped to some extent by the others. There is lively motion in both groups. They gather up things needful for an expedition, spears, staves, water-flasks, etc.* THERON, *a portly figure, does not change his cook's garb, but buckles on a very broad belt with hanging straps, and whets his butcher's cleaver with a stone. Shortly they are ready to start.*]

EURYLOCHUS

My mission is, sir ——?

ULYSSES

To announce, if those thou haply find'st wear not
Sinister aspect, our good-will and greeting;
And the right winds for homeward voyage inquire.

EURYLOCHUS

Very well, sir.—Fall in, lads!

[EURYLOCHUS' *followers draw closer to their leader, apart from the others. All are serious. Individuals take leave of one another here and there with hand-shaking, etc.*]

ULYSSES

The sign show'd near the summit. Your ascent,
Thorny perchance and steep, will prove not long;
The questioning, easy.

XENIAS

[*Seriously*] Have an eye to Theron, Glaucus; let him not be too forward with that meat-knife of his!

ELPENOR

[*Taking hold of a strap at* THERON'S *belt*] I shall hold him back.

ULYSSES

Full oft a forward mood and hardy daring
Is of prime merit; circumstance will teach
How far to temper zeal with slow discretion.
Farewell!

EURYLOCHUS

Farewell, sir!—Forward, men!

SEVERAL VOICES ON BOTH SIDES

Farewell! adieu! luck, luck!

THE FIRST ACT

[*The mate's company go out at the Right and upward.* EURYLOCHUS *himself is abreast of the foremost on their left. The vanguard consists of* GLAUCUS, THERON (*cleaver in hand*), *and* ELPENOR (*a fragile, attenuated figure*) *behind the cook, holding at his belt.* PHORBAS *and other timid ones bring up the rear. The drop-curtain falls as they move off while the rest watch them and wave their hands to them.*]

IV

The same as Scene I. The front of CIRCE's palace. No music or other sound is heard when the curtain rises. The fountain plays as before.—Enter at the Right by the main gateway EURYLOCHUS and his party, the men grouped similarly as at the close of the last scene, but in the reverse order. In advance are PHORBAS and the other timid ones; they enter hurriedly, casting glances of alarm behind them. The rest of the party immediately follow; EURYLOCHUS, GLAUCUS, and THERON last. ELPENOR is in front of THERON, who pushes him forward. The whole company quickly come to a standstill in a single close group with considerable space between them and the steps of the porch. They scan the building and its environs with looks of wonder, especially fascinated by the fountain with its changing hues.—EURYLOCHUS stands apart from the rest, his demeanor indicating hesitation and perplexity. While the others are talking he walks slowly to and fro, occasionally pausing and scanning suspiciously the various features of the scene.

THERON

It 's a rum go so far ! eh, Glaucus?

GLAUCUS

[*Shrugging his shoulders*] Rum 's the word ! An outpost of tame tigers ! It beats anything we 've walked into yet. Cyclops' cave was n't a circumstance.

THERON

I had a notion to crack the skull of that overgrown wolf-cub when he landed his dirty paws on my shoulders. But he looked sort o' gentle like, and besides I thought the old chap who owns the menagerie might take a miff—whoever *he* is.

GLAUCUS

It 's some retired show-man or prize-fighter, I reckon.

THERON

He 's got a blue devil penned up in his fountain, sure! Just look at that, old man; hock first, and blue vitriol at the tail end of it! There 's bitters for you with a vengeance!—Blast me, but I 'm thirsty as an oyster, whacking a way up through that pesky brush-wood! If there 's a chance to wet our whistles inside the house it 'll be worth the dog-show twice over.

PHORBAS

I tell you it 'll pay to be cautious about the inside. Ugh! it did make my flesh creep, crossing that cordon of wild-cats! There 's no knowing what we 'll put our foot on if we go farther.

ELPENOR

I put my foot on a snake.

GLAUCUS

They put an architect to work here that *saw* snakes, anyhow. Take a look at those water-spouts, boys! [*Pointing to the gargoyles*]

EURYLOCHUS

[*Approaching the group*] Well, men; what 's the next step? The commander said go ahead if the people were n't unfriendly. The wild beasts out there were friendly enough, you might say; but there 's an uncanny look to it all.

THERON

I vote to go ahead and knock up the owner. If he 's no worse than his own whelps we can stand it;—especially if he stands for the drinks.

GLAUCUS

There 's no two-legged craft within hail outside—nothing but four-footed gentry out here.

EURYLOCHUS

We might mount the stairs, then, cautiously, and

see how things look under the doorway yonder. [*Shaking his head*] But I fear enchantment.

[*As they approach the steps the hum of the spinning-wheel begins to be heard. The men pause again, and look at each other a moment in silence.* EURYLOCHUS *starts at the sound of the wheel, his features betraying heightened anxiety.*]

THERON

[*Slapping* GLAUCUS *on the shoulder*] God-a-mercy, it 's womankind after all, Glauc! Come on! Ha, ha!

ELPENOR

Maybe it 's a mountain.

[*They all move toward the steps again.* THERON, *with* ELPENOR *holding to his belt, and* GLAUCUS *are now in advance;* EURYLOCHUS *is at one side;* PHORBAS *and others are behind. As the first man sets foot on the steps the wheel stops humming and faint music strikes up as prelude to* CIRCE'S *song. Immediately a clear soprano voice is heard behind the scenes singing the air, the chorus of the song being performed by a quartette of women's voices. The hearers are sen-*

sibly affected, showing their feelings by appropriate pantomime as they alternately pause and mount slowly higher and higher upon the stairs. EURYLOCHUS *alone exhibits symptoms of horror and repulsion; the others seem to be charmed and lured on by the song. All of them except the leader are gathered together upon the porch close to the doorway when the last stanza is sung.*]

THE SONG OF CIRCE

Ah, who !—ah, who !
Who would dwell longer there *bis*
In a rude world of care,
Of toil and care !
They only live, who hear
My song and taste my cheer—
Who my life share. *bis*
Ah, who !—ah, who
Would toil and tarry there !

(*Chorus*)

They only live, who hear
Our song and taste our cheer—
Who our life share. *bis*
Ah, who !—ah, who
Would toil and tarry there !

II

I know—I know
Where bubbling waters flow;
Where shadowy willows sway
And wood nymphs hide and play
In my round isle.
I know which clustering vine
Spirts out the sweetest wine.
Who would not while
Swift hours away!
Ah, who!—ah, who!
In my round bowery isle!

(*Chorus*)

We know—we know which vine
Spirts out the sweetest wine.
Who would not while
Swift hours away!
Ah, who!—ah, who!
In our round bowery isle!

III

I know—I know
What makes the wood-dove moan *bis*
In the dark coppice lone;
I know the cure.
When floats the owlet's cry,
Her quavering lullaby,
Who!—ah, who!
While night winds sigh,
Who would not quaff the cure!
Ah, who!—ah, who!

(*Chorus*)

We know, we know the cure.
When floats the owlet's cry,
Her quavering lullaby,
Who!—ah, who!
While night winds sigh,
Who would not quaff the cure!
Ah, who!—ah, who!

GLAUCUS

[*Loudly, in a musical tone*] Hola!—hola!

[*Directly upon the utterance of this call the low, shaded recess of the doorway, which was dark before,*

grows bright with the same golden radiance that had shone intermittently upon the fountain; and the throng of visitors, excepting their leader, press swiftly forward and disappear through the opening. Again immediately the light in the doorway changes to blue, with electrical sparks. EURYLOCHUS, *who is directing his gaze toward the opening, shrinks back in alarm; and at the same moment the spray of the fountain becomes blue and remains of that color. Descending to a lower stair* EURYLOCHUS *peers under the doorway, listening intently. No sound is heard. Then, his attention being drawn to the sombre hue of the fountain, while he is looking away from the entrance, a large serpent lets down its coils from the roof of the porch; and as the man turns again toward the entrance he is confronted with its wide-open jaws, forked tongue, and glittering eyes. As he retreats precipitately from the stairs the serpent draws itself up out of sight.* EURYLOCHUS *stops once more in the foreground to watch and listen for some sign of his men within the palace; but as he turns toward the building, the head of a wolf with glowing eyes is protruded from a clump of shrubbery. Upon encountering this final apparition he flees in consternation from the scene.*]

V

The Seashore again. The curtain rising discovers the men left behind at the camp sitting irregularly grouped near the fire-place. ULYSSES stands apart from them by the ship, busied in inspecting his arms, the spear, bow, and sword, which hang near or lean against the vessel. When he unsheathes and sheathes the sword to examine it while his men are talking it is seen to have a brightly polished, rather broad, but not heavy blade, Most of the time he stands with face turned toward the water, his back to the Right.

FIRST SAILOR

Look here, lads; we can't wait till noon for a bite! The commander ordered breakfast so rattling early this morning I 've got a brand-new appetite already.

XENIAS

Well, take a nibble on that pile of Theron's charcoal cakes left over. They need a good appetite to make 'em slip down.

FIRST SAILOR

Maybe the mate or Glaucus 'll fetch in another stag or a wild goat on their way back.

SECOND SAILOR

A wild goose more like; I wonder how far they 've got anyway.

PHILEMON

They ought to turn up before noon. The commander said they might get up there and return in a couple of hours, as he judged—that is, if they scratched gravel lively.

XENIAS

They 've got Theron with 'em, remember; he can't pass between two trees when they grow *too* near together.

FIRST SAILOR

No, but he can clear a path with his cleaver for two men—him and Elpy spindle-shanks.

SECOND SAILOR

[*In undertone*] By the way, the commander 's pretty busy over there with his own cutlery. I wonder what he expects next.

PHILEMON

He expects to be *ready*, whatever comes. You don't catch him napping. Besides, who wants a speck of rust on a hanger like that? The war 's an old story now; and this salt air 's the devil's own invention to make a blade stick to the scabbard.

XENIAS

'T was a pity he could n't draw it on that Cyclops hog. But if we 'd let the blood out of him it would n't have let us out of his pesky cave with a giant's tomb-stone clapped up to the door!—[*Whistling low as he looks up.* XENIAS *sits facing the Right.*] Whew!—What 's in the wind now?

[*All turn quickly toward the point indicated by the speaker, not excepting* ULYSSES, *whose attention has been attracted by the whistle. At the Right from above* EURYLOCHUS *enters slowly and hesitatingly, looking pale and haggard, his clothing torn and disordered by the brambles. Observing that all eyes are directed upon him he stops as if afraid to approach the company.*

Most of the men rise to their feet and move toward him.]

SEVERAL VOICES

Hi! hi!—what 's the good word?—News, news? Where's Glauc? [EURYLOCHUS *responds only with deprecatory gestures.*]

ULYSSES

What? ho, Eurylochus! Hast tidings? Why alone? What ails thee, mate? Speak out; tell us thy story!

[*With gestures of dismay* EURYLOCHUS *moves nearer to* ULYSSES, *but does not speak.* ULYSSES *regards him with an expression of deep concern. The other men gather more closely round the pair.*]

XENIAS

Wake up, man! What 's in your eye? We 're here to help; cheer up!

PHILEMON

[*Patting* EURYLOCHUS *on the shoulder*] Out with it; out with it!—Go ahead; palaver!

XENIAS

Open up, old fellow. *You* 're not dead, anyway. We 're used to funerals by this time. [EURYLOCHUS *remains in his despairing attitude and is still unable to speak.*]

ULYSSES

[*Severely; taking a step nearer to* EURYLOCHUS, *while the men fall back slightly.*]

Eurylochus, I enjoin you and command
To conquer this o'er-mastering mute despair.
Deliver straightway the account we crave
Of your commission and make known why thus
Alone and fraught with visible woe thou comest.—
Where are they? Speak !—

EURYLOCHUS

[*With effort; after further hesitation.*]

Noble Ulysses, we did most duly follow
Thy charge and indication. And when with sharp
Stretches of toilsome clambering we drew nigh
This shaggy island's summit, where the ground
Sloped smoother, as these rude prickly folds gave way

To a tall grove of sombre trees which thrust
Their welcome shadows against the mounting sun,—
There 'twixt the spectral boles our upward glance
Fell on a portly mansion's shimmering sides.
But first, as we clomb higher, a court-yard wall
Barr'd, though with open portals, our approach.
For at its mouth a glowering throng, Ulysses,
Of pards and grisly wolves sat by; not wild,
But of a tameness stranger and more awful
Than fierce beasts' native temper—'t was sure sign,
And not the last, of foul enchantment. These
Strove not to tear and rend us, but were fain
Like petted dogs to fawn, wagging long tails
And monstrous paws on lap or shoulders throwing;
While in their eyes sad looks, half human, seem'd
To deprecate and warn. But we press'd on,
Heeding thy charge, Ulysses, to mark well
The human dwellers' aspect and of them
Inquire, proved they not unbenign or harsh.
Dwellers indeed we saw not; but the whole pile,
As near its door we stood, did reek and rumble
With devilish witchery. Scaly serpents writhed
At every coigne; faces with fiery eyeballs
Peer'd out amid the foliage; and o'er all
Weird flashes leapt of lurid sulphurous flame.

Yet that which most profoundly stirr'd my doubts
And dark suspicions, was the unearthly *song*,
With languorous music mixt, that issued forth
To charm and tempt us with seductive spell.
Myself shrank back when on my ear that strain
Of woman's guile or witch's magic struck.
Not so the rest, Ulysses,—our lost comrades;
But the song bound and pull'd them; nor could I
Stem their mad folly. One spoke forth and call'd;
And as the doors swang wider all were swept
Under the hellish gap; which, closing, swallow'd
Like an engulfing whirlpool the doom'd crew.
For though, as the song ceased, I watch'd and waited
Long time for tidings or some sign, none came:
Naught but a dismal silence and increase
Of snaky menace and blue infernal gleams!

[*Immediately upon the conclusion of* EURYLOCHUS' *narrative* ULYSSES, *who has listened intently, reaches for his sword near by; takes a quick look at the blade as he draws it partly out and then pushes it back into the scabbard; slings the weapon over his shoulder, puts on his helmet, and then turns to* EURYLOCHUS *again. The latter exhibits fresh dismay at seeing*

ULYSSES *thus arm himself. The other men also are visibly affected by their commander's movements.*]

ULYSSES

So then thou knowest the way, Eurylochus:
Lead on forthwith by the same path; show me
The spot where thou didst leave them.

EURYLOCHUS

[*Falling at the feet of* ULYSSES *and clasping his knees*]

Not thither, great Ulysses! Take me not thither!
Thyself will ne'er return, I know right well.
It is the road to death or to some state
Of hideous, vile bewitchment worse than death.
Thou canst not rescue them! What power hath man
To battle with foul uncanny spirits?—Nay,
This isle is haunted. Let us fly; we are
Thus many left alive. To ship and fly!

ULYSSES

[*Scornfully*] Eurylochus, 't is thy privilege; thou art free
To nurse thy safety, tarrying by the ship.
On *me* a duty rests; my course lies clear:
My comrades' fate I go to prove.

[EURYLOCHUS *retreats and cowers while* ULYSSES *speaks, at the same time gradually rising to a standing posture with his face toward the speaker. He does not join the group of the other men. These have their eyes fixed on the commander, some of them moving anxiously toward him. With his last words* ULYSSES *starts to go out at the Right.* EURYLOCHUS *turns away and sits upon a stone near the ship and the water at the Left, covering his face.*]

PHILEMON

May we not, sir, accompany you as guard
Or help at hazard?

ULYSSES

Nay, good men ; remain
And guard the vessel. My errand 's of espial
And wary circumspection : meet for one ;
For more, unsuited. I shall not slip. Farewell !

SEVERAL VOICES

Farewell ! farewell, sir !

[*The curtain falls as* ULYSSES *disappears, while the men stand following his footsteps with their eyes.*]

VI

The same as Scene II. CIRCE'S banquet-hall.—As the curtain rises the party who entered the palace at the close of Scene IV are shown seated at the table on the Left, while THERMIA and other nymphs serve them with food and wine. The cups are filled by pouring from tall slender pitchers of silver, and these in turn by dipping the wine with ladles from the punch-bowl on the sideboard. The Enchantress and her companions are in their usual places. MYRTO turns her wheel slowly and intermittently without noticeable sound. CIRCE, seated as before at the head of the table on the Right, wears the same dress as in Scene II, but her black robe is not thrown off. The wand lies upon the table near her right hand, neither carelessly nor conspicuously placed. The throne at her left hand, behind which PHILINNA stands, is occupied by *Mikkos*, who wears a brightly polished collar.

The guests are all at the table farthest from CIRCE. The throne at its head, opposite her throne, is occupied by ELPENOR. At his left, near the corner of the table, sits PHORBAS, partaking freely of the banquet, but glancing nervously, now toward *Mikkos* and now toward the door behind the dais where they had entered. At the left of PHORBAS sit some feasters with their backs to the audience. On the other side of the table, facing the audience, are THERON the cook (at ELPENOR'S right) wearing his cap; GLAUCUS (the farthest in the direction toward *Mikkos*); and other men between THERON and GLAUCUS.

It is near the close of the entertainment. Appearances indicate that the banqueters have begun to feel the effects of the wine that is still poured freely. They are also partly dazed and partly exhilarated by the presence of the Enchantress and her elegant nymphs. The symptoms of intoxication and bewilderment on the part of the men become by degrees more manifest as the conversation proceeds. GLAUCUS preserves his dignity rather better than his companions; but he seems fascinated by CIRCE, to whom he is the nearest in his position at table; and he does not refrain from drinking copiously, nor show due caution or a disposition to remember the details of the mission with which EURYLOCHUS had been entrusted.

CIRCE

[*After a pause*]

Ye do full justice, strangers and kind guests,
To this our welcome and the cheer we spread.
'T is right. Go on; and so with act sincere,
Not by the hollow word, those virtues prove
Which to my bounty I would fain impute.
And truly, until a guest hath quell'd the pangs
Of sharp importunate hunger, it were ungracious
To crave of him accounts or ply his ear
With curious question.—I am well pleased to wait
Upon your silence keeping even pace

With appetite.—Ye have not sat of late,
I judge, at flowing boards.

ELPENOR

[*Loudly*] We had roast *deer* yesterday.

THERON

[*Flourishing his fork*] Done to a turn!

CIRCE

Ah!—did ye then venture
To hunt and slay the creatures that frequent
My island park? It were no jest to play
The involuntary cannibal!

[*Some of the men are seen to be startled by this remark.*]

Follow'd perchance
Unusual visions in the wake of the feast?

PHORBAS

Yes, yes! my sleep ran ghostly; but I thought
'T was a mere nightmare.

ELPENOR

I thought I saw a *horse!*

CIRCE

Of our four-footed denizens we note
Two sorts : one of original beastly shape ;
Another, to which the brutal guise hath fallen
As fit encasement of their human habits.
And these two kinds, one from the other with sure
Discrimination to distinguish, proves
Sometimes not easy. Thus our good *Mikkos* here

[*Patting the ape lightly*]

Was once a philosopher of the ancient sect
Call'd pre-Ionic—in his day the most
Redoubtable of doubters.

GLAUCUS

[*Gravely; nodding his head unsteadily*]

Madam, we doubt it not.

CIRCE

Fate ordain'd
That to this island he should drift and taste
Our cordials. Whereon he was profoundly struck
With my maid Myrto.

[*Here* MYRTO *without looking up sets her wheel*

a-spinning loudly for a brief moment, causing the banqueters to turn their eyes in her direction.]

From that hour a change
Came o'er him.

MYRTO

It was a harmless fancy;
And he is harmless now.

[*Upon hearing* MYRTO's *voice* Mikkos *without turning toward her begins to raise himself by his hands upon the arms of the chair, but at a sign from* CIRCE *lowers himself to sitting posture.*]

THERON

[*To* CIRCE; *pointing with his fork to* PHILINNA]
But why, madam?—why did he not choose
That young miss there behind him?

CIRCE

He was a philosopher, I said.

THERON

He was a *pig!*—

CIRCE

Ah, by the by, Thermia, didst thou tell Graea
To renovate those sties?

THERMIA

I did, my lady.
More swine, she says, have bolted
And to the woods run wild. One sty stands empty.

CIRCE

It shall be fill'd erelong.

PHORBAS

[*Looking anxiously at a platter before him*]

Might there be a possible doubt about these spareribs?

CIRCE

Not the least;
I have a discriminating cook.

THERON

[*Helping himself to more meat*] You can wager
She knows pork when she sees it!

ELPENOR

My father feeds hogs too.

CIRCE

Thy father, gentle youth, will be to-morrow
One pig the poorer.—But where dwells he pray?

ELPENOR

He dwells at home; I left him there.

THERON

Lady, the lad forgets; I do much doubt
If his own name he can remember right now.

CIRCE

It is an infirmity that ofttimes with wassail
Waxes apace. But haply you, good sir,
Can tell me whence ye came?

THERON

O sure, ma'am! we came lately from a cove
Call'd Æolus.

CIRCE

Ah, what!—from my great kinsman,
The steward of the winds?

THERON

A windy stew
He brew'd for *us!*—Great Juno! *was* it breezy,
Glauc?

GLAUCUS

Madam, I am a sailor; but I never
Saw such incessant, damnable contrary winds
In all my voyaging!

PHORBAS

[*Rousing himself excitedly*]

Yes, yes; but who?
Who let 'em out? Who let 'em out?

[GLAUCUS *looks fiercely at the speaker and* THERON *extends his fist threateningly toward him.* PHORBAS *shrinks away.*]

CIRCE

But, gentlemen, pray inform me; whither now
Would ye be wafted? From which quarter should
Those breezes blow enabling you to reach
The desired haven?

THERON

We don't know that, because
We don't know where we are.

ELPENOR

We 're *here* now.

GLAUCUS

We 're downright weary o' pulling
Across head winds !

CIRCE

But which of you is leader?
Which one doth stand for steering and shrewd guidance?

ELPENOR

He stopp'd outside.

PHORBAS

We thought he enter'd with us ; but once inside,
We miss'd him.

CIRCE

What *he* hath miss'd he knows not. I shall send
Mikkos to fetch him.

GLAUCUS

Our leader, lady,
Is a good careful man, yet over wary
Of women or witchcraft. So soon he caught the strain
Of the song you sang it paralyzed him.

CIRCE

Ah!

GLAUCUS

Were he here now, he could not look you
Square in the face, as I do.

[GLAUCUS *is gazing at* CIRCE *admiringly.*]

ELPENOR

He might see
That brass snake on her arm.

GLAUCUS

He would abhor
The arm worse than the serpent.

CIRCE

Is then my arm
So frightful?

THERON

The arm 's all right, ma'am ; but there 's something wrong
About Eurylochus.

CIRCE

So ; Eurylochus is your leader?

GLAUCUS

Only a bit
Backward about leading, when he scents
A woman in the wind.

CIRCE

And he would fear
Us hospitable maidens?—and, we trust,
Of aspect not forbidding.

THERON

O, it 's all one
About the aspect. You could tree him, ma'am,
As quick as the giant's daughter.

CIRCE

The giant's daughter?

THERON

Yes, ma'am ; we landed lately on a lot
Of bloody cannibals—this big gal first ;
And Eurylochus took to a tree.

ELPENOR

[*Pointing to* PHORBAS] He climb'd up too.

CIRCE

What! does your friend fear women also?

THERON

O no, ma'am. Phorb 's a trifle timid like,
Whether it 's a he or she. You see, it 's this way:
Phorb was a-fear'd, because she was so large;
And Eurylochus, because she was a lady.

CIRCE

She *was* a lady then?

PHORBAS

She laid out Theron
When he made up to her.

THERON

I had half a mind
To make pork chop o' the bloomin' hussy!—Ye gods!
This meat-knife here does hang plumb heavy
For an after-dinner appendage.

[*He detaches the cleaver from his belt and lays it on the table, at the same time loosening the belt.*]

I don't want
The dang'd thing dangling at my haunches when
The dancing begins.

ELPENOR

When does it begin, Theron?

THERON

Split me if I know ! There 's a raft more drinks
On the tapis yet.

CIRCE

My friends, I shall soon show you
A new dance call'd the four-step.

SEVERAL VOICES

Hi, hi ! Hip, hip ! [*They pound on the table with their cups.*]

THERON

Ha, ha ! The four-step ; two-and-two two-step : That means partners !

[*He leers again at* PHILINNA, *drains his cup and*

waves it toward her.—Other men seem to pay increased attention to the nymphs serving them.]

GLAUCUS

[*Admiringly, but unsteadily*] Do you dance it, madam, yourself?

CIRCE

O no; but Mikkos knows it.

[*Here the ape slowly raises himself by the hands until all four extremities rest upon the arms of the chair, remaining a moment or two in this position before lowering himself.*]

THERON

Would you mind, ma'am,
Letting that there young miss step over here to take
The place of this one?

He points to PHILINNA *and indicates* THERMIA *behind him with his left thumb over the shoulder.*]

ELPENOR

[*Parenthetically*] Don't take *her* away !

CIRCE

A moment, sir ; I have some present need of her.
One choicest cordial I have not yet brought
To your attention. In my island only
The vintage can be stored.—A jar, Philinna ;
Here on my table.

PHILINNA

Do you mean, my lady,
The wine which for ourselves alone we press?

CIRCE

Yes, child ; these are no every-day arrivals ; go !

[PHILINNA *goes out at Right 2. The other nymphs present, except* MYRTO *and* THERMIA, *leave the room quietly and unobservedly, closing the Left central door.* THERON'S *song begins as* PHILINNA *disappears. The refrain and chorus are joined in by all the men except* ELPENOR *and* PHORBAS, *who look at each other and laugh.*]

THERON

[*Sings; still looking toward the door where* PHILINNA *went out.*]

It was a stout sailor who cook'd for the crew;

ALL

Sing yo, heave yo!

THERON

A-shedding salt tears while he season'd the stew.

ALL

A-shedding salt tears while he season'd the stew.
Sing yo, heave yo, on the briny!

THERON

Salt tears for the sweetheart that jilted him last;

ALL

Sing yo, heave yo!

THERON

And the onions he peel'd made 'em fall thick and fast.

ALL

And the onions he peel'd made 'em fall thick and fast.
Sing yo, heave yo, on the briny!

CIRCE

[*To* GLAUCUS] Would *that* song paralyze your leader, sir?

GLAUCUS

The allusion would prick him, madam; depend upon it.—

[*Turning to* THERON] One more, Thee,—till she 's back with the bitters.

THERON

[*Sings*] One fine morning the pudding-bag busted a flap;

ALL

Sing yo, heave yo!

THERON

So he boil'd the noon mess in his greasy cook's cap.

[*Here* THERON *takes his cap from his head and lays it over a plate.*]

ALL

So he boil'd the noon mess in his greasy cook's cap.
Sing yo, heave yo, on the briny!

THERON

"For God's sake," cried the captain, "what 's struck the plum-duff?"

ALL

Sing yo, heave yo!

THERON

" We don't need hogs' bristles to flavor the stuff! "

ALL

" We don't need hogs' bristles to flavor the stuff! "
Sing yo, heave yo, on the briny!

[*With the last chorus* PHILINNA *re-enters bearing a punch-bowl of elegant pattern, smaller than the one on the sideboard at the opposite end of the room. She places the bowl upon the table before* CIRCE, *while the men become silent as they look on.*]

MYRTO

My lady, may Mikkos have a drop?

[*At these words the ape begins to draw himself up by the hands again.* CIRCE *nods assent to* MYRTO.]

CIRCE

Philinna!

[PHILINNA *fills a cup from the bowl and hands it to*

the ape. She also sets a small cup of wine before CIRCE. Mikkos *drains the beaker, holding it with both hands and throwing his head very far back; and while the eyes of all the men are directed toward him with amused attention* CIRCE, *opening a very small silver casket that hangs at her girdle, takes a fine powder therefrom and quickly throws it into the bowl. She draws the wand nearer to her hand.*]

CIRCE

Thermia!

[*At the word,* THERMIA *passes up to* CIRCE'S *table and she and* PHILINNA, *filling pitchers from* CIRCE'S *bowl, proceed to refill the cups of the banqueters in regular order,* THERMIA *from left to right,* PHILINNA *from right to left. Then as they meet at the centre both the nymphs retire together to the extreme Right near* CIRCE. *Meanwhile the sombre figure of* GRAEA *the Swine-maiden is discovered lurking in the corridor behind the Right central doorway.*]

CIRCE

[*Raising her cup*] To the health of your backward leader, my brave guests!

GLAUCUS

[*Half-rising; unsteadily*] Out, out! To hostess, hostess! Here 's to hostess!

[*All drink; and the effects of the drug straightway become apparent. An expression of stupefaction and horror passes over the faces of the men. They look at each other vacantly with forced smiles; their heads and arms sway and droop; they swing round in their seats and are evidently unconscious of their situation. At the first symptoms of this delirium the Enchantress rises deliberately from her throne, wand in hand; and gliding along the line toward the Left taps lightly and quickly each man with the wand without pausing in her course. Then she steps upon the dais.*]

CIRCE

[*Sternly; with wand pointed upward and back toward the Right centre*]

Hence to the sty! your proper shapes assume!

[*Directly* GRAEA, *who during* CIRCE'S *movements has stridden noiselessly into the room and has passed along its edge behind* THERMIA *and* PHILINNA *and the Enchantress' throne until in front of the other table near the point where* PHORBAS *sits, raises her*

long whip and cracks it fiercely with sharp detonation at the men's feet. In a huddle they rush tumultuously away with drooping heads and arms to the open rear doorway and out through it, passing in front of MYRTO *and her wheel and followed by* GRAEA *lashing furiously. Some of the fugitives, as they drop on all fours near the exit, are seen to have already developed curly pigs' tails at their posteriors. As the victims rush forth* Mikkos *springs upon the empty throne of* CIRCE *and balancing himself upon its arms gazes intently into the bowl on the table before him, while* MYRTO *sets her wheel revolving and humming loudly. The drop-curtain falls just as the door closes behind the herd and* GRAEA *disappearing over the corridor.*]

The several positions at the fall of the curtain are as follows: CIRCE stands upon the dais with wand raised in the attitude described. MYRTO sits at her wheel, which turns more and more slowly as the curtain descends. PHILINNA and THERMIA stand near the boudoir, still holding their pitchers, the hand of one girl resting on the other's shoulder. *Mikkos*, poised upon CIRCE'S chair, his head lower than his tail, pores intently over the punch-bowl. No person exhibits signs of amusement or excitement of any sort. Their faces are serene, their figures motionless. The wheel comes to a standstill just as the descending curtain hides it.

VII

The same as Scenes III and V. The Seashore. EURYLOCHUS is still seated on the stone by the ship, gloomy and dejected. The other men stand in a group not far from him, apparently discussing some serious proposal.

FIRST SAILOR

Anyway he ordered us to stay here and guard the ship.

PHILEMON

Just so; I believe in obeying orders myself; but, lads, this is an extraordinary case.

SECOND SAILOR

A case it is! But the commander 's equal to it I reckon.

XENIAS

The commander 's equal to anything on a square deal. But it 's odds here against one man; he 'll need help if the land lies the way the mate makes it out.

EURYLOCHUS

[*Turning and facing the others without rising*]

Are ye all mad, and will not lay to heart

The sights and sounds of foul bedevilment
Haunting this cursed island? Will ye follow
Into the pit the steps of that rash man,
Foolhardy Ulysses?—the same who prick'd us on
To explore the ogre's cavern, where six brave men
Were sever'd limbmeal and devour'd !

SEVERAL VOICES

Out ! out !

XENIAS

Bother the ogre ! The commander 's started now to pull half the ship's company out of a hole and if a human subject could compass the business he 's it. But if there 's a dash of witchcraft here, we ought to be with him and shoulder our share.

FIRST SAILOR

Ay, ay ! that 's the talk !

EURYLOCHUS

What signifies mere number, when mortal wills
Clash with uncanny spirits? It is all over
With him and them !—We are enough to row
Our galley launch'd and from these shores deliver'd.

SEVERAL VOICES

Ho, shame ! shame !

PHILEMON

Mark my words, lads ; if the other fellows have got to trot round in wolf and tiger skins we 're bound to go on all fours along with 'em and not leave 'em in the lurch. If the commander 's beating his way back we shall meet him on the trip ; if he is n't, he 'll need help for certain. We 'll walk into that domicile, witch or no witch !

SECOND SAILOR

Take her by storm !

SEVERAL VOICES

Right, right ! Come on ! come on !

XENIAS

Eurylochus here 'll stand shipguard. He won't shove her off all alone I reckon.

PHILEMON

Take up your traps now ! Lively !

[*The men stir about, making ready for their departure.*]

Here we go!

[*They march away briskly, going out as the other party and* ULYSSES *had gone.* PHILEMON *leads;* XENIAS *brings up the rear, watchfully.*]

XENIAS

[*Turning back, at the last moment*]

Don't let her fly away, old man;
If you hear hell howling, it 's *us!*

[*As the party disappears* EURYLOCHUS *with a gesture of despair flings himself down by the keel of the vessel.*]

VIII

A grove upon sloping ground near CIRCE's palace. Large trees cast deep shadows with sunny spaces between. The mansion itself is not visible; but on the Left at some elevation a glimpse is afforded of the court-yard wall. A faint pathway amid shrubbery winds from the Right front upward and out on the Left at the rear.

Enter ULYSSES at the Right, tracing the path slowly and cautiously. Perceiving the wall above and before him he pauses, moves his right hand involuntary toward his sword-hilt and lifts the left to his lips meditatively. While he thus stands reconnoitering and pondering, MERCURY suddenly appears before him, stepping noiselessly from the shadow of a tree upon the Left. At this apparition ULYSSES draws back an instant with head slightly bowed, while his hand leaves the sword and is lifted to a reverential gesture. The demeanor of MERCURY is easy and gracious. His insignia, though plainly recognizable, are less conspicuous and brilliant than they appeared in Scene II.

MERCURY

[*Taking the up-lifted hand of Ulysses*]

Whither now, fate-worn wanderer, whither tending
Thread'st thou the dim paths of this briery steep?
What region holds thee or perchance what guile
Lurks in its mazy folds, wouldst thou not prove? —
Ere to that dome ascending, where in foul sties

Thy luckless comrades grovel now and groan,
To swinish shape by the enchantress changed!

[*As the god speaks he withdraws his hand and indicates the direction of the palace.* ULYSSES *recoils slightly at the last words of* MERCURY.]

One only, so minded that in Circe's song
He read the bane it glozed, did value well
His safety and proclaim'd their loss.—Whom thou
Aimest forsooth to rescue and redeem!
Rather methinks the porcine couch to share
With them and vanish from men, came not
Some guardian hand between.—But lo! there grows
An antidote—a good drug, that shall check
The baleful magic of her potions.

[MERCURY *pulls from the ground, moving aside the undergrowth which concealed it, a small plant and shows it to* ULYSSES.]

See!
Black at the root, milk-white the flower; 't is *moly:*
So to the immortals known; of men, scarce found.

[ULYSSES *receives the herb from the hand of the god with an air of profound attention and a shade of wonder.*]

Now may thy steps to yon weird mansion mount
And tread its halls unscathed, Ulysses, if
My mandate thou shalt heed and ponder well.

[ULYSSES *shifts his attentive regard from the plant in his hand to the speaker.*]

Her song will thrill thee, but the transforming spell
Shall break before the potent herb thou holdest.
Undaunted wilt thou enter; nor be shamed
If thy quick pulses bound when Circe's glance
Encounters thine, and the soft audible charm
Of low-voiced invitation laps thee round.
Thou may'st admire and still be master. Straight
With her own hand a fragrant wine-cup filling,
When by her side she thrones thee, she will proffer
And bid thee drink—it is the poison'd chalice.
Yet quaff thou undismay'd, Ulysses. Then,
So soon 't is swallow'd and thyself unchanged,
Her magic wand wielded in vain, draw thou
Swiftly thy sword and rush as if to slay
At the enchantress with high-threatening blade.

[ULYSSES' *look of wonderment increases as* MERCURY *pauses.*]

The issue thou wilt mark. But let not pity
Nor the new spell of female blandishment

O'ercome thy senses or disarm thy hand,
Ere to its mastery yet once more she yields
And their true forms to thy changed mates restores.

ULYSSES

O gracious Helper, it is thy spirit that guides
Where eye of mortal swerves: to whom full oft
We pour'd thank-offering at the banquet's close.

MERCURY

Who himself well bethinks, the gods assist.
Of drugs and arts uncanny mere human prudence
Compasseth not, Ulysses, sure defeat.—
But in her craft once baffled, 't is with the *woman*,
No more the enchantress, thou wilt deal thereafter.
Nor are those powers to be despised, which oft
Compel a conqueror's fealty and confuse
The sober aims of confident wisdom.

[*While* ULYSSES *again looks down reflectively at the plant he holds* MERCURY *suddenly disappears.* ULYSSES, *looking up and seeing the god no longer, throws a keen glance in the direction of the wall. He then tastes and swallows a morsel of the herb; and as he moves on and goes out at the Left with firm step the music of* CIRCE'S *song is faintly heard behind the scenes.*]

IX

The same as Scenes II and IV. The banquet-hall. The common chairs have been removed. There are cups and a bowl on the table at the Right. The Enchantress and her three nymphs are in their usual places when the curtain rises: CIRCE sitting; PHILINNA and THERMIA standing; MYRTO seated at her wheel which she turns slowly. The attitude of the persons is one of expectancy. In a moment CIRCE, without turning her face, signs to MYRTO with her left hand while with the right she draws the wand on the table nearer. The wheel ceases to revolve.

CIRCE

Now Thermia!

[THERMIA *throws open the door behind the dais. An instant later* ULYSSES *enters, slowly but unhesitatingly, pausing as he stands on the platform exactly where* MERCURY *stood in Scene II. His look is directed straight at the Enchantress. His right arm is crossed downward upon his breast, the hand under the mantle. A trace of wonder or fascination passes over his face on meeting* CIRCE'S *gaze, while a similar feeling of surprise is for a moment betrayed by her also. As she speaks she rises from her chair.*]

CIRCE

Welcome, sir leader!

[ULYSSES *bows slightly. He does not remove his helmet.*]

Thou art
Too far by thine own men outstripp'd, even though
Their famish'd weary members sought repose
Prompt and appropriate.

[ULYSSES *bends his look more sternly upon the speaker.*]

Pray advance; and take
From our own hand, though proffer'd late,
Cordial refreshment.

[*He moves slowly forward.* PHILINNA *draws well back the throne of* CIRCE *and presents the other one. With a gracious gesture* CIRCE *waves* ULYSSES *toward the second throne. He passes in front of her and seats himself. She sits again, served by* PHILINNA.]

Thy silence augurs much
Of rude unfriendly greetings and rebuff
Elsewhere.

[*While speaking she fills a beaker from the bowl.*]

But here are restful words and welcome
Right hospitable.

[*Her right hand closes firmly over the wand, while with the left she presents the cup.*]

So drink and be at peace!

[*Still keeping his eye fixed upon* CIRCE, ULYSSES *raises the cup to his lips and drains it. Immediately the gracious look of the Enchantress changes. Rising partly in her seat and bending forward, she strikes him smartly with her wand and holds it threateningly as she speaks.*]

CIRCE

Hence to the sty! Go, join thy wallowing mates!

[*Instantly, feeling that the potion has not harmed him,* ULYSSES *springs erect, swiftly draws his sword and raising it aloft rushes upon the Enchantress as if to kill her. With a loud cry she starts back, causing the throne to slide away behind her; then dropping her wand she springs forward under the threatening sword-arm in suppliant attitude.* PHILINNA, *at first shrinking back in terror, directly as* CIRCE *falls at* ULYSSES' *feet follows her; and kneeling, shelters her mistress' head with her right arm, while the left is raised in deprecating gesture. At the same time* THERMIA *starts a step forward with her right hand*

lifted, the left pressed to her bosom. MYRTO, *after a first look of alarm, reaches behind her and throws open the Left rear door, where* Mikkos *appears. He seems excited.* MYRTO *seizes his chain. At the Right rear entrance,* GRAEA *is seen glaring furtively into the room.—*CIRCE *speaks as* ULYSSES *seems to hesitate to strike the fatal blow.*]

CIRCE

What man art thou? What mortal hath this wonder
Unheard of wrought, these potions to abide?
For never, never did other lips unblighted
Press the drugg'd bowl, save thine!—Ah, yes;
'twas true:
Ulysses thou art, whom Mercury foretold,
From Trojan field thy lone bark homeward steering.
He, he hath found thee moly! And I thought
It were Eurylochus, whom his followers named;
The craven, the woman-hater!

[ULYSSES *lowers his weapon, still grasping it firmly. His stern look relaxes slightly as* CIRCE *and* PHILINNA, *kneeling, lift their faces to him with aspect softened to the expression of pleading.* THERMIA *steps nearer, intently observing the scene; while* GRAEA, *entering*

the room, and MYRTO, *holding* Mikkos' *chain, also move slightly forward. At this juncture all of the persons have come to form nearly a single group.*]

CIRCE

O Ulysses!
Thrice valiant, thrice in wisdom proved, not thee
Would Circe in foul brutal shape behold;
But as thou art!—Return, return thy sword
To its safe cover!

[ULYSSES *steps back a pace, and* CIRCE *rises to her feet, holding the hand of* PHILINNA *who has risen first.*]

What use have we for war,
Whom fate and fortune fashion'd to be friends?

[*With deliberation* ULYSSES *sheathes his sword, falling back still farther.* CIRCE *and* PHILINNA *move forward toward him.*]

THERMIA

Happy are they who find a friend in Circe,
Sir stranger!

[*His countenance remains unmoved as he divides his attention between* CIRCE *and* THERMIA *after a suspicious glance at* Mikkos *and* GRAEA.]

CIRCE

Nay, doubt not, but be refresh'd !

[*She signs to* THERMIA, *who shows* ULYSSES *to the throne which* MERCURY *had occupied in Scene II. As he sits he doffs his helmet, which* THERMIA *receives and hangs upon the wall.* CIRCE *resumes her seat. She speaks while* THERMIA *serves* ULYSSES *at the other table.*]

And be thy mind at rest. No more of drifting
On the dark seas ; sure knowledge shall illume
The pathways of thy homeward voyage, Ulysses.

[*A pause. With troubled look he barely tastes what is set before him.*]

Ah, weary heart ! why thus
Sit'st thou all-speechless, tasting not the food
Set guileless by thy hand? Believ'st thou not
My plain assurance and changed mood? Dost hold
The word of Circe in no honor because
With cunning art she baffles and disarms
The unworthy false petitioner?

ULYSSES

Fair Circe, dread enchantress, what true man
Could eat and be at comfort, whilst he knows

His trusty comrades lie imprison'd, bent low
To bestial habit?—Nay, if thy alter'd mien
Harbors indeed the good-will it portends,
Then first let me behold my men restored
To their own shapes. No falsehood stamp'd their errand,
Nor undeserving were they in themselves.

CIRCE

Deserve those well of their commander, who lose
His very name and tidings from their thoughts?

ULYSSES

Another led them; and, the leader failing,
The follower who forgets may be forgiven.

CIRCE

Eurylochus wins slight mercy by that word.

ULYSSES

Eurylochus won the birthright of the wary.

CIRCE

A father art thou to thy men, Ulysses:
Even as I guard with jealous motherly eye

The welfare of these nymphs. Nor hast thou long
To wait, ere the whole frolic throng shall make
My portals ring with greetings of their captain.
Not those alone whom we repress'd and punish'd
And for thy sake will pardon, but likewise they
Who tarry by the shore—for well I know
Wily Ulysses staked not all his forces
On a forlorn wild venture.—Nay, doubt not;
Even Eurylochus shall be reconciled!
Go, Graea; Myrto; seek the ship, and teach them
The way to find us. Leave not one unbidden!

ULYSSES

Great Circe, I will trust thee; 't is sore need!
By thy sage guidance, or in no wise, we reach
The desired haven.

CIRCE

[*To* MYRTO *and* GRAEA *who have hesitated as if awaiting further command. They go out at Right C, accompanied by* Mikkos.]

Speed now! the shadow creeps
Well past the noontide mark. Away, away!—
Noble Ulysses, thou shalt soon behold them.—
But first, my Thermia, show our gracious guest

The bathing chambers, where by warm showers assuaged
His long sea-weariness may release him.

[ULYSSES *bows to* CIRCE. *He unslings his sword, which* THERMIA *receives and hangs up near the helmet. She then conducts him out at Left 2. At the same moment when* ULYSSES *puts off his sword,* PHILINNA *lifts* CIRCE'S *wand from the floor where it had fallen.*]

PHILINNA

[*Handing the wand to* CIRCE, *who receives it as it were unconsciously*]

O dearest lady !
What chance, what change befalls us? O ! how dared
That strange, still man to lift his dreadful sword
As if to kill you? Are his devices stronger
Than your own arts? O, how could you pretend
To cherish and befriend him !

CIRCE

Nay, Philinna :
I am not feigning. Oft had I mused and ponder'd
On Mercury's warning and Ulysses' name.

Nor did I dread his coming. But strange haps
Disturb'd my vision and I knew him not.
My potions could indeed avail no longer,
Their cure and antidote once found. Yet never
Into unworthy hands do gods resign
Their priceless secrets. No; I would not harm
A man so strong and wise! It is the *first!*—
Now go, Philinna, and lay my simples ready,
Which for the counter-charm I shall employ,
To change his comrades back.

[PHILINNA, *who looks wonderingly at* CIRCE *and seems hardly to comprehend her demeanor, withdraws slowly, going out at Right 2.* CIRCE *casts a glance where* ULYSSES *had gone out; then, looking down at the wand held loosely in her hand, soliloquizes.*]

Yes, yes; there is
No falsehood on the lip, when the heart guides
To new unwonted utterance, though it seem
All former strains and strivings to belie.
His coming I fear'd not; I rather craved
To behold the promised visitor whose shrewd wit
Should test my powers of magic and perchance
Turn them (as hath befallen) from woe to weal

For him and his. Yet till I saw I doubted;
Nor knew, first seeing.

[*She clasps her hands at her back, holding the wand behind her.*]

O, there is a way
Surer than any drug, to bind wise hearts!
Wielding no wand of transformation, but
With fine invisible weapons to o'ercome
His might who seems to conquer; and reveal
What weakness lurks beneath. And Circe's arts
(Which sooner aim to hinder than to harm)
Shall still fail not!

[*Re-enter* THERMIA, *who begins to put the table in order where* ULYSSES *had been served.*]

Fair Thermia, we shall need
Straightway new-garnish'd tables and the plenty
Of a redoubled evening banquet. Soon
That eager company, Myrto's charge, will troop
Past porch and threshold to the expected board—
Not indisposed, I fancy, toward such welcome.—
Ay, forthwith, Thermia!

[THERMIA *sounds a whistle which hangs at her girdle, and other nymphs enter and proceed to deck the tables.*]

Even our guest, their captain,
Will find his zest, when in good sooth he sees
His two ship-companies made one.—Ah, there;
Even now they come!

[*A clambering and murmur are heard. The door leading from the porch flies open, and* ULYSSES' *company, headed by* PHILEMON *and* XENIAS, *enter precipitately, though not in rude disorder, their faces beaming with the excitement of wonder and expectancy.* CIRCE *stands at her usual place, holding the wand with her hands clasped in front of her, and* PHILINNA *appears at the door behind.* THERMIA *and her helpers desist from their task at the tables as the men enter, and draw back near the exits. The nymphs stand motionless and placid during the remainder of the scene, taking no part in the action and unnoticed by the other persons.*]

PHILEMON

Madam, we 're a bit unceremonious, no doubt. But our errand 's an urgent one; and we encountered an invitation after a manner, if there be no mistake about it.

CIRCE

All ceremony shall be waived, good sir. What hap Fosters this urgency?

PHILEMON

We 're *Ulysses'* men, lady ! come to seek him and deliver him—by your leave. He cast off alone when the leader of the other watch came back from here in such a blue funk ; and he ordered us to wait for him by the ship. But we felt a trifle uneasy, after that yarn of snakes and fireworks Eurylochus spun for us, and followed to help. We 'd nigh about made the top, when we met your two maids, ma'am, and the monkey. We knew they must hail from some witch-pen or other for certain, when we spied such a bunch of triplets, and we veered off a point or two at first ; but the little black-eyed one—she as had the ape in tow—spoke us so fair and told such a straight story, how the commander was safe and sound and everybody happy up here, and you had sent specially to invite us, that we felt mighty encouraged to believe her and headed

straight for the top again, while they went down to fetch Eurylochus;—especially seeing we had made up our minds—begging your pardon again, lady—to effect an entrance anyway.— But where is he?

CIRCE

Your entrance had been barr'd nowise, when once
You had named Ulysses—which your mates forgot,
And came to grief thereby.—But you shall see him.
There hangs his sword, his helm.
He comes; he has heard you!

[ULYSSES *enters at Left 2 behind the group of men, who turn quickly. His appearance is imposing, his dress brilliant.*]

CIRCE

For me, I have another
Business to set on foot.—Philinna; ready?

[PHILINNA *signs affirmatively, and as* ULYSSES *greets his men* CIRCE *goes out at Right 2,* PHILINNA *remaining at the doorway.*]

ULYSSES

Xenias! good Philemon!

[*All throng about their commander with hand-shaking and joyous exclamations.*]

PHILEMON

'T is you? You are here, sir?—and all right!
'T was a true tale, then, by the great gods!

ULYSSES

Ah, you see I slipt not.

XENIAS

But it was n't long before we slipt after you! Mind you, sir, we did n't wait for the summons.

ULYSSES

'T was a pardonable impatience, I acknowledge.

[*A voice raised in sharp tone of command, followed by a sudden uproar, is heard behind the scenes.* CIRCE *enters quickly at Right C, with her wand raised high, which as she comes in she lowers and points backward. Both the rear doors fly open. In their proper persons the men who were changed to swine burst in abruptly upon the scene, one or two or three at a time, stopping and gazing about them with*

puzzled and amazed expression. They rub their eyes or tap their foreheads, till gradually recollecting themselves they recognize their situation. The restored men seem to have gained in comeliness; their faces are fresh, their clothing is new, presenting a contrast to the well-worn garments of the other party. THERON *appears even stouter than before; his cook's cap and dress are dazzling white.* ELPENOR, *near him, has become sleeker, though no less slender than ever. All the men are serious; and the re-transformed exhibit profound emotion, weeping as they recognize their companions and the commander. The meeting is an occasion rather for action than for speech: its words are chiefly outcries and the ejaculation of familiar names. The throng becomes more calm and quiet when the Enchantress, who has herself been visibly moved, at length speaks, standing at the head of her table.*]

CIRCE

Cease; cease, good men! Enough of tears! Yield now
To the bright hour; and from your much-tried hearts
Let present peace and comfort rub away

The black unhandsome stains of foul mischance.
Here stand ye face to face and hand to hand,
Unscathed, unconquer'd. Winds and wild seas and all
The weary thankless strain of laboring oar,
Duress and guile and hostile rude encounter,
Have but conspired to point you to the fairest
Of restful shores.—Ulysses, in good time,
After due respite, if thou cravest still
Some farther convoy, 't is secure. But now
Mirth, pleasure, shall prevail.—Only there lacks
Yet one I would fain welcome, though himself
Of faint reciprocation.

ULYSSES

Gracious lady, I am confident that Eurylochus will conclude to join us when once informed of our situation and finding himself left permanently alone.

XENIAS

Belike he may take to the woods, your honor, when the triplets heave in sight.

CIRCE

O, Mikkos will manage that!

ELPENOR

Eurylochus climbs trees.

THERON

Avast there! Mikkos is the monkey. Hast left thy memory in the hog-pen, boy?

GLAUCUS

[*Who has been on the lookout*] Sail ho! They are boarding the gangway already, ma'am.

[*Enter from the porch* MYRTO, *leading* Mikkos; *then* EURYLOCHUS; GRAEA *behind him. The mate advances hesitatingly, but is closely followed up by the swine-maiden. As he perceives* ULYSSES *and the men his expression is partly of relief, partly of shamefacedness. His alarm has not entirely left him, but he casts shy and suspicious glances toward* CIRCE *while* MYRTO *speaks.*]

MYRTO

We have fetched him, my lady, though I believe he never would have been caught if there had not been three of us together. We found him down by the little bay where their ship is drawn ashore; and when he saw us he started

to run into the water. But Graea waded out farther than he dared to go. Then he climbed up into the fig-tree; but Mikkos climbed up still higher, so he had to come down directly where I was standing close to the roots of it; although he seemed to fear me the most of all.

ELPENOR

[*Interrupting*] You turn the whirligig.

MYRTO

We had him between us now, where he could n't get away; and I assured him the captain was safe, and told him how we had just met a party of his companions and invited them for you. For all that he did n't want to come; but Graea stood close behind him and kept walking until we got him here.

[*The men do not laugh at* EURYLOCHUS, *though some smile faintly, and* CIRCE *is visibly amused.*]

ULYSSES

[*Seriously*] Eurylochus, all is well. Be thyself again. Bygones shall be bygones. There is naught to fear.

CIRCE

Indeed, sir, it is as your commander says. There is naught to fear; and all is well, now that you have deigned to make up the perfect number of my company, so the entertainment may proceed. The tables are ready garnished, waiting for the viands only. You shall all find seats.

[*All the men except* EURYLOCHUS *seat themselves in a quiet and orderly manner at both tables without discrimination of the two watches.* ULYSSES *sits at the head of the table by the dais.* MYRTO *and* GRAEA *have withdrawn to the back of the room.* CIRCE, *still standing, claps her hands and the nymphs at the exits disappear, to bring the courses.*]

EURYLOCHUS

You make occasional exceptions no doubt, madam; nevertheless I would take my oath upon it that *that* was once a man!

[*He points at* Mikkos, *who, released by* MYRTO, *has just jumped into his chair by* CIRCE *as she seats herself. The ape shows his teeth and begins to raise himself by the hands.*]

CIRCE

[*Laughing*] That was a manful *thinker* once. Sit; sit, kind sir!

[*The curtain falls as* EURYLOCHUS *takes his seat near* ULYSSES *amid a buzz of merriment.*]

END OF FIRST ACT

ACT TWO

I

THE back of CIRCE'S palace, late in the afternoon, one year later than the occurrences of the First Act. The back of the building lies toward the setting sun, whose declining rays are now intercepted and softened into shade by foliage and flitting clouds. The pale yellow walls and tall narrow windows and the one central entrance on this side are not obscured by vines and trailing plants, but cleanly sheltered by a lofty colonnade which runs the entire length of the edifice, with wide low pavement only a step higher than the lawn that borders it. The veranda-floor and the plinth are dewy with freshly sprinkled water. The green sward of the foreground is varied by flower-beds and dotted with luxuriant trees, a bower and seats near by. Here there is no fountain; but a streamlet, issuing from an archway at the Right corner of the palace, winds its way downward across the flowery slope. A peacock struts and spreads his fan in one of the open places. Some utterances of persons represented indicate that the situation affords glimpses of the sea.

There are no suggestions of witchcraft or magic in the present scene. Where the anterior façade of the palace seemed weird or uncanny, the rear elevation and its belongings wear rather an idyllic aspect.

The curtain rising discovers three couples severally grouped. Upon the veranda, at the Left, CIRCE and ULYSSES are seated

opposite each other at a small table, upon which are cups and a vase of flowers, while a nymph occasionally passes to and fro, serving them with wine from within. CIRCE is not attired as enchantress. She wears neither her black robe nor the coronal of pearls. The prevailing color of her Grecian dress is amethyst, and her hair is loosely confined by a narrow band of gold.—On the Right, at the farther end of the veranda, PHILEMON and PHILINNA sit side by side in confidential attitude.—Upon the lawn, in the foreground near the centre, far enough from the others to converse gently without being overheard by them, are seen XENIAS and THERMIA: the former seated carelessly facing sidewise toward the colonnade; the latter standing by a tall shrub, cutting flowers which she gathers in the fold of her garment.

THERMIA

[*Who stands with her back to the veranda*]

If you will take a good long look, Xenias, just where you are looking now, you will see exactly why you and I are a whole lot luckier than some others I might name.

XENIAS

How is that? What 's the mystification now, Miss Inscrutable? I see only what we see every day; and no great signs of bad luck about them yet.

THERMIA

Of course we see it every day! And every day is making it worse for them, friend Xenias. Do you suppose they can keep this sort of thing up forever?

XENIAS

Well, what if they can't? I 've no doubt the illusion is mighty pleasant while it lasts.

THERMIA

And so much the more painful when it comes to an end—but you and I have kept our wits about us, Xenias.

XENIAS

And have been uncommon good friends all the time, you mean, Thermia—Well, I admit it 's the best way. But they don't think so.

THERMIA

They think of nothing! But it will set them thinking, when the time comes for you to sail away.

XENIAS

If that time ever does come! The commander has got to order it; and he does n't seem very likely

to speak the word until your lady orders *him*. It 's true some of the lads are getting restive and tired of dilly-dallying, as they call it, here in this blessed island!

THERMIA

Yes, and Graea gives me to understand that Eurylochus is going about secretly stirring them up and wants them to put on a bold front and demand that something shall be done.

XENIAS

Ah, so? He has n't said a word to me or Philemon. I reckon he thinks Philemon and Xenias are in the same box.

THERMIA

Eurylochus does n't know the difference, of course! I shall be sorry when you have to go, Xenias; I shall miss you sadly after you are gone. But it will simply *kill* Philinna.

XENIAS

Well now, what if Philemon should take her home

to Ithaca with him for his wife? *He* has n't got any Penelope waiting for him there.

THERMIA

O heavens! And do you believe Philinna would ever leave Circe, or that Circe would ever let her go?

XENIAS

And do you believe Philemon would ever leave Philinna behind, or that Philinna would ever let him go without her?

THERMIA

Xenias, it 's a pity about them both—the greatest pity in the world! As for Circe, she really admires your captain; great men are scarce enough, she says; but Circe will never lose her head, even if Ulysses has lost his; nor will either of them be quite heart-broken, be sure. But Philinna! Philinna!

[CIRCE, *who has been laughing merrily with* ULYSSES, *claps her hands twice.*]

Yes, now; here comes the music they feed on.

[THERMIA *begins to move away as* THRATTIS *the lute-girl enters from the palace in response to* CIRCE'S *summons.*]

XENIAS

But stay, Thermia, and let us hear it.

THERMIA

O, it will only be the same old songs! Besides, I have my vases to fill.

[*She goes out round the Right corner of the building.* XENIAS *settles himself in a listening attitude.*]

CIRCE

Thrattis, we need thee still.—'T is strange, Ulysses,
How, like some thirst or hunger, each day return
These tuneful memories!

ULYSSES

Yet, fair Circe, charged
With a more strange forgetfulness of all else
Than that they celebrate.

CIRCE

Hist, listen now!

THE SECOND ACT

THRATTIS

[*Standing midway between the two couples on the veranda, after a brief prelude upon her instrument, sings.*]

Forget, forget! Ah, linger not
By dreams of yesterday!
Each vanish'd hour shall be forgot,
Fresh phantasies hold sway.
No lowlier crown the linden weaves
Of tassel'd verdure now
Because the old year's scatter'd leaves
Return not to the bough.

CIRCE

[*While an interlude is played*] Our Thrattis echoes thy thought, Ulysses; and indeed I find a certain sort of wisdom in the ditty.

ULYSSES

Yet methinks it carries somewhat of a different effect from the open intention of it.

CIRCE

Wait, listen!

THRATTIS

[*Sings*]

Forget, forget ! In love's demesnes
No faded chaplet wear ;
Nor conjure phantoms from lost scenes,
To sit unbidden there.
Round heaven her sign swift Iris sets,
Flings forth her jewel'd zone :
O, who beholds it but forgets
The frowning storm-cloud flown?

[*The singer bends her head to hide her face as she sweeps the strings again.*]

CIRCE

Good Thrattis, thou art tired standing. Sit and sip of the wine. Thou need'st sing no farther now.

PHILINNA

She weeps, my lady.

[*As* THRATTIS, *declining the offered refreshment, turns and goes within.*]

CIRCE

Poor soul ! truly I pity her.

PHILEMON

But why does the girl weep, sweet Philinna? Has she some express sorrow attending her?

PHILINNA

O yes, Philemon; nor will she put it entirely away. 'T is three years agone since she floated to our island, lashed to some fragment of a vessel from the north which the hurricane had wrecked; but her father and two brothers who so saved her life themselves perished in the sea.

PHILEMON

O, sad story; unhappy Thrattis! Yet so I do much wonder at the song she chose to sing.

PHILINNA

We could do little to assuage her grief. But Circe has been kind to her and taught her the songs she sings so sweetly to her lute.

ULYSSES

Perchance some such strains would comfort the child as the captive Trojan maidens might

listen to betimes among us at the ships when the harp was struck.

CIRCE

Pray what, Ulysses?

ULYSSES

Such as sounded praise
Not for the living and the days we lived
(Which with their moil and megrim did afford
Scant food, I grant, for eulogy) ; but ever
With vision backward turn'd the bard would seek
Among long-treasured memories one most apt
And draw it forth. Then did we lose all sense
Of aching limbs, sore wounds, and comrades slain,
Whilst in high-swelling measures like great waves
Of Iphitus or Heracles he sang—
Glories of ancient men.

CIRCE

It was fair medicine
To still the pains ye dwelt in. In my isle
Such cordials find not place.—But come, Ulysses,
And see me prove the powers of that rare herb

Whereof I promised.—Philinna, attend us. Of simples
My sampler art thou.

[CIRCE *laughs heartily as she utters the last words and she and* ULYSSES *rise from their seats.* ULYSSES *joins in the laugh.* PHILINNA *smiles faintly and seems loth to part from* PHILEMON *as these two also rise.*]

CIRCE

[*Laughing again*] Thy Philemon
Will not forget so soon.

[CIRCE *and* ULYSSES *go into the palace followed by* PHILINNA.]

XENIAS

[*As* PHILEMON *turns toward him, stepping down from the veranda*]

The commander and our Lady of the Herbs seem to be in a right merry mood, Philemon.

PHILEMON

That they are indeed, to judge by the colors they fly.

XENIAS

You take it not quite so. And yet methinks you have as good cause as they to be blithe.

PHILEMON

I take your meaning, Xenias. Nevertheless I 'm sheer doubtful now and then—as though too great happiness should somehow have a sobering effect, as you might say, upon a fellow.

XENIAS

Then belike when the commander sobers down a bit he will pass the word for a home start.

PHILEMON

Ay, truly I have thought of it.

XENIAS

[*Laughing and clapping his friend on the shoulder*]

But you 're not in a raking hurry about it; eh, Philemon?

[*Re-enter* THERMIA *round the Right corner. She comes quickly toward the men.*]

But here 's Thermia again, in a hurry about something or other surely.

THERMIA

O Xenias ! I 've seen Graea again and have learnt that Eurylochus has called all the men to a meeting at the shore to-morrow morning early about that business.

PHILEMON

Ah, what business, Thermia?

THERMIA

You tell him, Xenias.

XENIAS

Philemon and I were just upon the same matter—about the commander passing the word to cast off.

PHILEMON

Well, it seems the mate has n't invited *me* yet.

XENIAS

No, nor me; he thinks you and I would pull on

the wrong quarter, laddie. But I shall be on hand just the same to see how the wind does blow. Don't you go, Philemon; you have n't the heart for it.

THERMIA

Ah, thou art sad, Philemon; I feel for thee.

PHILEMON

O, let it come; let it come!

THERMIA

Yes, the day is bound to come, sooner or later. I would I could belate it. But farewell now. [*She goes out.*]

PHILEMON

Xenias, I would not ask thee to hold back
And thine own sentiments belie because
Mine do enchain me so to Circe's isle
As in its soil the roots of yonder oak
Are wove and knotted. No; it is for you all
Timely and reasonable—nor for Ulysses least—
To set your faces homeward. But to me
That home so dimly beckons now, I know not
If it be there or here!

XENIAS

[*Stepping closer to his friend*] 'T was not thy wont
To doubt, Philemon, with faint wavering heart,
When we together oft by chilly Troy
Crouch'd with our captain in an ambuscade
Or sprang from the galley's prow full-arm'd ashore
At Tenedos or Chryse. Be thyself; be bold!
The girl is not to the island rooted fast,
Even though, as they pretend, their mothers be
Fig-trees and fountains. We go: take *her!* Herself,
I 'll wager, nothing loth.

[*While the last words are exchanged between the two men the figure of* GRAEA *the swine-maiden, unobserved by them, is seen passing furtively behind and occasionally halting as if to listen.*]

PHILEMON

Ah, Xenias,
Thou knowest not Philinna. She is true
Not to me only.

XENIAS

I know. Untie them!
If need be, cut the knot! Love glories
In shifts and stratagems.

PHILEMON

Ah, 't were not easy!

XENIAS

Think; ponder! Swear it: *If with Ulysses' crew Philemon sail, Philinna shall sail too.*

[XENIAS *seizes the hand of* PHILEMON *and they go out together at the Left.*]

THE SECOND ACT

II

The Seashore, early in the forenoon of the next day. The scene is the same as in the First Act, but the signs of a temporary encampment have disappeared and the hull of the vessel is encumbered with grass and weeds. The curtain rising discovers both watches of the crew (excepting GLAUCUS and PHILEMON) disposed in scattered groups; some of the men sitting or reclining; others standing. All seem preoccupied and the faces of most wear an anxious look. The demeanor of EURYLOCHUS, who stands in a conspicuous position, is more confident and dignified than in former scenes.

FIRST SAILOR

Well, I suppose the devil knows how long we have got to wait before they show up.

SECOND SAILOR

We 're lucky if they ever show up at all. Ten to one Glauc 'll come back without him.

FIRST SAILOR

Ay, ay ! It 's a question whether even Glaucus can get the commander's ear—leastwise he 'll have to get Madam Circe out of the way first.

PHORBAS

Mark me; we are n't safe yet ! There 's no knowing

what sort of beasts she might turn us all into even now, just to keep him with her a year longer!

SECOND SAILOR

I 've a notion we 'd have done better to send a man of the commander's own watch—some one that never was a hog.

XENIAS

Bravo! where will you find such a one? Glauc 's all right; it 's enough to have a man who was n't *always* a hog.

FIRST SAILOR

Ha, ha! Theron, that 's one on you.

THERON

To hell with it! hang the hogs!

ELPENOR

My father *sticks* his.

FIRST SAILOR

That 's the talk, Elpy; keep the culinary department straight!

SECOND SAILOR

But what if he 's so bewitched he won't come and talk anyway?

EURYLOCHUS

Peace, peace!
'T is scarce an hour since we despatch'd our comrade
On no brief errand.
Be patient; have good hope! It hangs, I know,
On the razor's edge; yet leans the weightier cause
Toward consummation. Witchery there is still;
Else were there little need to prompt Ulysses
To his plain duty. Drugs have their antidotes,
Which to employ are easy when once found:
More subtle—ay, more deadly! than her potions
Are these soft blandishments, cared she to play them
To their full scope. But it has stood forth clear,
Though once I did mistrust the promised convoy:
Not in malevolence the enchantress binds
Ulysses' will. And when good Glaucus comes,
Fearless and plain of speech and charged with all
The prayerful hot commands we laid upon him;
When he, unheard of Circe, bids his captain

Arise, for old Laertes' sake; and, backward
With stern reproachful finger pointing, names
The faithful wife who waits, Penelope,
Icarius' daughter:—then, perhaps, this cord
Of crimson devilment will snap—remembrance,
Conscience awake.

XENIAS

Eurylochus, was it not
Here on this very shore a twelvemonth since,
Launching the half-mann'd pinnace, you would fly,
Your mates left in the lurch?

EURYLOCHUS

But for Ulysses
(This you would add) the doors of their foul prison
Had closed on them forever.

XENIAS

But to-day
They jest and laugh, though 't is in Circe's isle.

THERON

Damn me, too, if we 're the only ones that have

learnt to mumble spoon-victuals and dance with tree-toads in the moonlight!

EURYLOCHUS

Xenias, there is a fear to which all others
Are as soft zephyrs to the tempest: it is
When spirits uncanny mock the paltry arts
Of mortal courage. But for my fear, no tidings,
No warning, no alarm had reach'd you.

FIRST SAILOR

Hi, yi! [*He points upward to the Right*] They 're coming! There 's old Glauc digging down this way.

SECOND SAILOR

[*Spying through his hand*] Alone! by the living gods!

[*Groans are uttered by some of the men, with gestures of disgust and disappointment.*]

EURYLOCHUS

Hold; wait!
He waves his staff; he smiles; he brings, be sure,
No grievous answer!

[*Enter* GLAUCUS *bare-headed, carrying a staff with oak-leaves attached, which he waves to and fro.*]

GLAUCUS

All 's well! all 's well, lads! It 's a go; the commander has struck his colors. We 're off, sure!

[*The men throng about* GLAUCUS, *some hurrahing and throwing up their caps.*]

SEVERAL VOICES

But where is he? What 'd he say? When 's he coming?

GLAUCUS

O, belay there! Everything takes time. He had to go and talk with madam first, of course—and not take French leave like an orang-outang. He 'll be here in a jiffy.

PHORBAS

Yes; but what 'll she make him say when he does come? I tell you we 're not well out of this kettle of fish till we 've cut loose into high water!

GLAUCUS

Avast! He 'll say what comes into his head. The lady 's got a head on her too: she 's not the kind of a craft to capsize at the first catspaw of wind, don't you believe it!

FIRST SAILOR

Put on a life-preserver, Phorb! Shin up the mast!

ELPENOR

The mast is n't shinned up itself yet.

EURYLOCHUS

Glaucus, we owe thee thanks.

GLAUCUS

Not a bit of it! I doubt if we 'd have dared to tackle him for another year if you had n't put us up to it, old man. But you may set me to walk the plank if he does n't talk fair now.

XENIAS

Hold on, lads! Seats again! there he comes! Stilly, stilly!

[*Enter* ULYSSES *at the Right, wearing sword and helmet. His aspect is gracious as he comes to a stand near the men, who sit in silence. Before speaking he casts a contemplative glance seaward, then turns toward the vessel.*]

ULYSSES

Our good ship! Ah yes; the seams
Gape in her sun-parch'd sides, and rank weeds twine
Their prickly meshes round her shriveling keel.
Yes, yes, my men; full long we have sat still,
Basking in languorous fancy, rapt, unheeding
This summons to the wave. Nor tarried others
Behind, to follow and seize us: as when those
Who clomb the banks of Lotus-land and straying
Ate of the flowery food, their souls
Steep'd in forgetfulness, we seized and bound,
Stifled their cries and dragg'd them to the shore.—
To-day they are no more: so many
Death's winged minions snatch'd and in wild sport
Flung them to feed the sea-god's ravenous brood;
Or, on strange shores their white bones strewing, sign'd
The landmarks of our course.—What wonder, then!

What wonder, O brave comrades, if, so spent,
So spared, beaching beside enchanted bowers
Our single bark, lull'd under lustrous skies,
Encircled by fond arms, we linger'd fondly
And long. But now, welcome the tug and strain
Once more, as ye have will'd it : the bent oar,
The creaking rowlock, Zephyrus' shrill pipe,
The thundrous pounding surge ! Nor now, as then,
Shall we unpiloted and blindly plow
Our swift sea-furrow ; but wise Circe's words
Will be to us as beacons. We shall know
What winds press homeward ; on which hand to hold
(When oft to night course our sick yearning prompts)
Orion and the Bear.—If only
Her solemn friendly warnings ye can heed,
Which in good time I shall expressly cite,
All may be well.

EURYLOCHUS

Trust your men, sir, for that—leastwise if past experience avail them anything in the way of instruction for the future.

ULYSSES

So prove it ! On the third morn we start. Meanwhile
Let none stand idle ! To-day remains in part ;
One other day to-morrow, whilst we urge
The labors needful to our voyage. Draw water ;
The wine-jars and the barley-crates replenish ;
Refit the tackle.—Now let the old ship drink
And plume herself again !

SEVERAL VOICES

[*As the men, who have already sprung from their seats, gather round the vessel*]

Hurrah ! hurrah !
Off with her ! Rush her out !

GLAUCUS

Look lively, lads ! Knock away those props ! Clear
out the ways there for'ard !

SEVERAL VOICES

Clear it is ! Lively, lively !

ULYSSES

Eurylochus, I depute

To you the furtherance of these tasks. My presence
Another foresight claims.

EURYLOCHUS

Very well; very well, sir!—

[*To the men, some of whom have climbed on deck*]

Drop the bow-chains over there, boys! Catch on, half a hundred of you! There she goes; steady, steady!

[*The curtain falls as* ULYSSES *goes out at the Right and the ship, pulled and pushed by many hands, begins to move toward the water.*]

III

The back of the palace, in the evening of the same day as Scene II.—As the curtain rises ULYSSES and CIRCE are discovered in the foreground: the former occupying a low seat by a tree; the latter reclining near him. Upon the veranda, forming a group by themselves though not far removed from the others, PHILEMON, XENIAS, THERMIA, and PHILINNA are seated at a table, apparently playing at some game by the light of a hanging lamp. ULYSSES and CIRCE are revealed to view by the rays of the moon, which near its full is rising above the palace roof.

CIRCE

Those children are making a brave effort to play at their game, Ulysses. They pretend to-morrow will be soon enough for parting salutations.

THERMIA

[*Who has overheard the remark*] O Circe! Philinna cannot play at all; she throws amiss every time.

CIRCE

Well, I doubt if her Philemon does much better.—There are at least two aching hearts over there, Ulysses.

ULYSSES

Yet I have remarked Philemon seems not exactly depressed by it. Indeed both he and Xenias surprise me, how cheerily they await the event.

CIRCE

They are men: new scenes, new labors summon them; thoughts of their home. But my poor nymphs must rest contented hereafter with only me and the even sameness of our days.

ULYSSES

Even so ye lived blithe-hearted ere we came.

CIRCE

Hearts *more* than blithe we knew not ere ye came.

ULYSSES

Counts not the added bliss as gain meanwhile?

CIRCE

True gain or loss the final balance shows.

ULYSSES

Then, till it 's struck, hope for the winning scale.

CIRCE

Such hopes help mortals cheat themselves, Ulysses,
Even of the present profit.

ULYSSES

But I note,
Thy tacit precept, thine own example, leads us
To drain the brimming cup and count as naught
What pangs might follow.

CIRCE

Ulysses, my example
(For in these closing hours I will confess it)
Hath my soul's truest insight much belied.
Thou didst with moly baffle my magic art:
The *woman's* craft to baffle quite, no helper
Could guide thee to a clue. Hate there was none—
As well thou knowest: my bosom's pride conceal'd
No sinister, vindictive purpose. But
Poor Circe, worsted, won her mastery back
And turn'd to sportive vengeance her defeat,
When with wise incantations wise Ulysses
She sang to sleep.

ULYSSES

There needed those more weary,
If not more wise, to wake him.

CIRCE

But meanwhile
My gentle partners, my sweet nymphs, I so
Imperilling left—that same mischance whereof
With a vague prescience more than once I warn'd them—
In these new toils ensnared, when the spell broke,
To droop as their own clipt flowers.

[*While the last few words are pronounced there has been brisk talking, not distinctly overheard, on the part of the other group.*]

THERMIA

[*Loudly*] O, for shame, Philemon! What a thing to say!

PHILINNA

[*Passionately*] 'T is *he;* 't is he himself cares not!

CIRCE

[*Turning toward the veranda, where* PHILEMON *and* XENIAS *have just risen to their feet*]

Ah, now! what coil is this? Philinna, speak!

THERMIA

O Circe! 't is Philemon—and Xenias too; they say
We are but women's women: at the last moment
(They tell us) we choose *you!*

CIRCE

O foolish children!
Must your vain quarreling blight such hours as these!—
But whither? Philemon! Xenias! will you leave us?

PHILEMON

'T is only, my lady, a certain business calls us forth expressly at this time.

ULYSSES

So, my men? A strange time for business, is it not?

XENIAS

It were so, sir, but for a slight affair of our own, to which we should properly give our attention by high moonlight only.

CIRCE

[*Laughing*] Holy Diana! Have they, too, turned to magic?

XENIAS

Pray excuse us, all!

[*The two young men go out by the Right corner.* PHILINNA, *bending over the table, covers her face with her hands, while* THERMIA *rising attempts to soothe her.*]

CIRCE

O, mind not, dear Philinna, his hasty words!
Though heartless sounding, they did rather prove
The same concern that draws thine own tears now.
Lead her within; thou canst console her, Thermia;
Thy stronger courage will avail.

[*The two nymphs go into the palace.*]

ULYSSES

Circe, I like not this foolery of the high moonlight.
Though it be a trifle ludicrous, the lads seemed
right serious about it nevertheless. 'T is unlike
Philemon. I like it not.

CIRCE

O put the thought aside, Ulysses!
It is some youthful prank, or a mere jest
Fresh-coin'd with sober mouth. Nor falls amiss

Thus on the girl's untried, too tender spirit
Some jar and crossing ere the final shock,
So to forestall and break it.
And this moon!
Well she deserves, Ulysses, in thy sight.
Have we not sought ourselves her soothing spell?
Masking a farewell colloquy in smiles,
As yonder silver'd wave-tips feign deliverance
From the encircling gloom of envious night.
Ah! if thou didst but know,
Son of Laertes, half the struggles that wait thee
By Neptune's billowy realm and, rescued thence,
In deadly strife at thy rude island-home,
Then wouldst thou feel, perchance, less haste to leave
Circe, the frail enchantress.—Ay, not all
The signs to guide and perils that impend
Canst thou learn now. Some, long in mystery wrapt
(Nor wouldst thou choose to speed them), time will teach;
Others, from ghostly lips compell'd, when soon,
By Ocean's stream thy lone bark moor'd, thou standest
At the dark doors of Hades to evoke
Theban Tiresias' shade, the seer shall utter.

ULYSSES

Dread Circe!
O strange, unpitying prophetess, no mortal
Reaches by sail or oar that awful strand.

CIRCE

Thou shalt be one, Ulysses, who, twice dying,
Twice lives to rue his birth.—But hearken;
And on the mindful tablets of thy soul
Grave these my warnings. Back from the sunless shore
Of pale Persephone the refluent tide
Will bear thy bark unurged: till, facing
The ruddy sources of recover'd day,
Fresh-waken'd breath of quickening winds she feels
Smite on her listless sail. So hold her prow,
Toward Eos striving surely, from my isle
Farther and farther speeding.

ULYSSES

But how soon?
How soon, O Circe, may our glad eyes behold
Some signal of known lands?

CIRCE

So much not yet
May be unveil'd; nor yet, what remnant lingers
Of crew or vessel until that hour.—But hear,
How (lest their doom be hasten'd) on thy helmsman,
When 'twixt unlovely neighbors he must steer,
The crisis hangs. On this side Scylla lurks,
Snarling in her cliff-cavern; on that, Charybdis
Retches, with swirling gorge. Thrice happy he
Who, nor to the right inclining nor the left,
Cleaves straight the midway mark with even keel.

ULYSSES

But why not of the engulfing pest steer wide
And with arm'd hand fend off the other's onset?

CIRCE

Ah!
Thus do presumptuous mortals vaunt their cunning,
Or vain force, where alone swift vision wins.—
If, then, alternate ruin ye elude,
In some part scatheless, sweep with thankful hearts

The gleaming waters' wide unbroken waste.
Then soon, Ulysses, as to my lay thou only
Mightst listen and be saved, even so alone
May'st thou, safe sailing, hear the Sirens' song.

ULYSSES

Breathe any so sweet a strain as that, O Circe,
Which binds the caller at the moaning porch?

CIRCE

Not binds, but draws! No sense-benumbing spell
Boast the sea-maidens, nor themselves are fair.
Their theme, what men call *glory;* and the strain,
Bell-like, o'er the hush'd seas far pealing, calls
With a resistless summons to their shore.
It, with white skulls and rotting wreckage lined,
Thou shalt speed by, yet hear. Lash'd to the mast
By thy men's hands—themselves with wax-stopt ears—
Bid them, when thou with frantic dumb entreaty
Wouldst sign their stroke toward that melodious lure,
Pull stronger and swerve not, with firmer bonds
Lashing thee still, while yet one echo
Of siren-voices lingers.

ULYSSES

Circe, full long
Thy tale of helps and hazards, though not few
Still on their fixt oracular moment wait.
Be these enough, while courage step by step,
Conning each several danger, learn to face it.

CIRCE

'T is well.

[*Thus far* CIRCE *has been reclining, with occasional changes of attitude due to the earnestness of her discourse. She now rises to a sitting posture.*]

[*Laughing*] But forget not, most prudent captain,
The risks thy moonstruck followers would invite
In these my precincts!

[*She gives her hand to* ULYSSES, *who assists her to rise.*]

It were worth while to note
Their traces. Come; they went this way.

[*She leads out at the Right,* ULYSSES *following with downward thoughtful look.*]

IV

The grove upon sloping ground, at noon of the day following the previous scene.—Enter from the Left downward MYRTO leading *Mikkos*. With a glance toward the path on the Right she seats herself under the tree by which MERCURY appeared to ULYSSES, while the ape, whose chain MYRTO continues to hold, swings himself to a low branch above her.

MYRTO

Well, Mikkos, they are not here yet.— But Graea never loiters and they will soon come. Now I charge thee once again; and be thou, as a reflecting animal, less slow to curb thy native animosities, Mikkos! Look not upon Eurylochus as thine enemy, receiving him with angry and unseemly gestures. Eurylochus is our friend to-day; and his co-operation in the present emergency is invaluable.—Hear'st thou, Mikkos? [*The ape grins and wags his head.*] Very well; now conduct thyself like a rational being! I hear them coming.

[*Enter from the Right upward* EURYLOCHUS, *followed closely by* GRAEA. *The former, after a suspicious glance at* Mikkos, *who shows his teeth and tries to shake his chain, turns inquiringly toward* MYRTO *who remains seated while the others stand.*

EURYLOCHUS

Graea has by her signs made known to me, Myrto, that you would have me attend you here at this time; and I have inferred from the earnestness of her manner that the message is of importance.

MYRTO

Important indeed it is, Eurylochus: I need your assistance; and not for myself alone—perchance even somewhat for thine own weal; but especially on behalf of the lady Circe and all of us her poor companions—whom to be sure thou lovest not.

EURYLOCHUS

One may love not, Myrto, and yet be nowise lacking in good-will. You would not have called in an unfriendly hand to aid you.

MYRTO

In the present matter at any rate thou wilt be sure to side with us.—Wouldst thou choose to take one of us home with thee in the ship, Eurylochus?

EURYLOCHUS

How? What? Forbid it, mighty Apollo! Is your mind wandering, Myrto?

MYRTO

It is not I, but a pair of your pretty comrades whose wits are wandering; for they would carry away Philinna, unbeknown to Ulysses and the rest of you, hiding her in the vessel.

EURYLOCHUS

Ah! we know of Philemon's madness—and the girl consents to this?

MYRTO

No indeed! they will put her to sleep with Circe's drug—

EURYLOCHUS

[*Interrupting*] O Heracles!

MYRTO

And so bring her aboard the ship to-night, while you are all at the palace partaking of the farewell feast.

EURYLOCHUS

Then if you have discovered this plot, why not warn her straightway and cut it short?

MYRTO

Not so, Eurylochus!

[MYRTO *rises and addresses herself earnestly to him.*]

Not till the latest moment must Philinna
Perceive the strange and treacherous design
Of him she loves, who, if he loved her less,
Would spurn the trick his clever mate has taught him.
Now hear me; and observe
How thou shalt aid us, with least harm to foil
This harmful scheme. Nothing the herb itself
Of baneful sort to mind or body works:
But whoso of its fragrance breathes in slumber,
For six-and-thirty hours wakes not again,
Nor feels, nor can be roused. They hold its leaves
Gather'd beneath pale moonbeams, when the plant
Best cools its juices and conserves its force.
These they will bruise and spread
About the pillow of Philinna's couch,
Where she each day—now at this very hour—

Seeks her brief noontide sleep : by the moss'd bank
So near the waterfall its gauzy spray
Like an ethereal veil enshrouds the bower
Where our companion rests ; and muffled tones,
Voiced by perpetual whirling waters, soothe
The slumberer's ear. Of vines her bed is join'd :
Gnarl'd stems which from the vineyard pruning once
We fashion'd to a woodland couch, to sit
And watch the headlong stream. This lifting
(So Graea heard them whisper) they will bear
With its fond burden shoreward ere the dawn,
While yet ye feast and revel. And they hope
To hold her hidden (nor will she wake) until
Too far at sea the flying ship hath sped
For ruth or reparation.

EURYLOCHUS

O great gods !
Herself by good rights, waking then, should rue
Her wanton witcheries.

MYRTO

Peace, Eurylochus ; peace !
Perverse and all one-sided is thy sense :

On the other side thy mother bore thee blind.
Not yet hast thou been taught the part thou playest
In the prevention.—At the feast this night,
Ere the two plotters to their work slip out,
I at my wheel (whom thou wilt watch) shall give thee
This sign—with finger prest to lip : whereat
Thyself withdrawing noiselessly to join
Graea who waits without, with her wilt hie
To poor Philinna's bower : and both shall bear
Hillward by the back path the couch and sleeper
Into the banquet-hall to Circe.

EURYLOCHUS

And what revenge
Will Circe wreak upon the thieves?

MYRTO

Circe is wise ;
Needs not our counsel.—And, Eurylochus, mark :
Thy secrecy here will stand thee in good stead.
A narrow pathway tread ye all, so long
In this round isle ye linger ! Go ; and be mindful !—

[EURYLOCHUS *goes out at the Right downward.*]

Now, Graea—for thy sharp ear no caution needs,—
His part and thine are fixt. And further, Graea;
When chilly night descends, visit her bower
And lay soft fleeces o'er Philinna's form,
Sheltering her deep dishonest sleep.

[GRAEA *by signs gives her assent,* Mikkos *jumps down from the tree, and all go out by the Left upward.*]

V

The same as the first scene of the play. The Front of the Palace in the afternoon. The porch and its steps are already in the shade. The curtain rising discovers THERMIA seated upon one of the lower steps thoughtfully regarding the fountain, which plays faintly. Enter MYRTO upon the porch from within.

MYRTO

[*Taking her seat upon a step*] Yes, there is shade here now; Circe will come soon.

THERMIA

I know not why I feel so anxious, Myrto,—wondering what communication you can have to make while Ulysses and his men are away at the lading of their vessel.

MYRTO

Now pray, Thermia, if what I shall say to Circe startle you in some degree, restrain yourself and show not perturbation. Circe, as you well know, likes not hasty suggestion in what concerns her deeply.

THERMIA

'T is true; I will be prudent. O, what can it be?

MYRTO

Wait; here she comes now.

[CIRCE *entering descends the stairs to a seat just within the lengthening shadow by the fountain. She wears her canary-colored tunic, but not the black robe.*]

CIRCE

[*Turning toward the stairs*] Myrto! Thermia! Where is Philinna?

MYRTO

She sleeps, my lady.

CIRCE

Sleeps still? 'T is past midday more than two hours! Philinna is wont to sleep soundly, but not long.

MYRTO

She will sleep long this time, Circe: Philinna will not wake to-day.

CIRCE

[*Starting to her feet*] What! Not wake to-day? Dost thou trifle with me, girl?

MYRTO

Indeed I do not trifle with you. But fear not, dear lady; there has been mischief, but harm will not come to Philinna.

CIRCE

Mischief—mischief? Methinks I divine somewhat. But speak; explain thyself forthwith!

MYRTO

They have given her the sleeping-plant which last night they gathered under the moon.

THERMIA

[*To herself*] Ah, I see my precious Xenias' finger here; the traitor!

CIRCE

O! O! Audacious, shameless souls!
With my own drugs would they outwit me? O!
I see! I see! Thus they will *steal* Philinna.
But holy Diana! [*Laughing scornfully*] So sly, and yet so simple!
They were twice foil'd, ere such a plot could prosper.

MYRTO

Truly there needs small skill to circumvent them :
Such I have summon'd.

CIRCE

But the herb?

MYRTO

I show'd them.

CIRCE

What? Myrto, Myrto !

MYRTO

Stay ; hear me, Circe.
Their plan I knew beforehand ; and 't was better
She knew it not ; should rather sleep ; nor wake
Till the whole farce were play'd—seest thou, my lady?

CIRCE

O clever Myrto ! Not in vain thou sittest
Demurely by thy wheel, as if its hum
And spinster's sordid finger-work were all
Thy wits could compass !—thou, the nixie-born ;
With newts and water-beetles nurtured !—But how
Came it to light?

MYRTO

They came to me,
To find for them the herb. The tale they told,
How, when the ship had sail'd, among themselves
Some sport they would devise. But Graea already
Had overheard their whisperings and advised me.

THERMIA

Graea is everywhere and hears all things!

CIRCE

Hush, Thermia!

MYRTO

Because she hath no tongue they do forget
Her sharpen'd ears.—Safely Philinna sleeps;
And to your side shall she be brought to-night
During the banquet.

CIRCE

Ah! ah!

THERMIA

And will they dare, finding her not,
To wait for such an issue?

CIRCE

Whither pray
Might they seek refuge?—Two alone are guilty;
And two alone shall answer for the guilt;
Nor shall the feast be marr'd. Go now;
And urge its preparation.

[*The two nymphs go into the palace.*]

CIRCE

Poor purblind men!
O, how short of the mark their vision falls!
Phantoms, bred of precipitate desire,
Aiming to grasp, but comprehending not
The check and natural limit.—So the same
At whose achievement we should rave, in failure
We pity and forgive. Ay; to know more
And to see farther than for themselves they see
Doth make forbearance easy. How would they change
For sweet Philinna's rainbow-guarded sleep
Their own long slumber in the fishy deep!

[*She ascends the steps and goes into the palace.*]

VI

The banquet-hall late at night. The feasting is near its end and the wine has begun to be poured at the farewell entertainment given by CIRCE to her guests in the last hours before they set sail. The Enchantress sits at the head of her table, wearing her black robe and coronal of pearls. THERMIA and MYRTO are in their usual places; but PHILINNA is absent and the throne at CIRCE's left has been removed. ULYSSES sits at the head of the table by the dais. His demeanor is serious; but the men though orderly are in high spirits as they join in the chorus, with the exception of PHILEMON and XENIAS, who seem pre-occupied, seated together near the exit behind ULYSSES. EURYLOCHUS is so placed as to face MYRTO at her wheel. The first chorus following is sung before the rise of the curtain.

(*Chorus of men's voices behind the scenes*)

Never fear for your ship if you handle her right;
She will scamper all day and eats nothing at night.
Stick her nose in the sand, she is safe in the stall;
She 's a carriage and horses and stable and all.

[*Curtain rises*]

GLAUCUS

[*Sings*] We sampled his cheeses and bunk'd in his den,
But when he came home he ate six of our men.—
"People don't come a-foot when they come to see me:
Now where did you leave the old frigate?" cried he.

(*Chorus*)

GLAUCUS

It was a big pickle, we forged a big lie:
"A thunderbolt struck her, Sir Cyclops," said I;
"Tore a hole in her timbers as wide as a door;
She sank to the bottom and we swam ashore."

(*Chorus*)

GLAUCUS

So we punch'd out his eye with a stake while he snored,
Then broke for the landing and scrambled aboard.—
His rock was a load for a twenty-mule team:
"Heave hard there"! I shouted; "heave hard, Polypheme!"

(*Chorus*)

GLAUCUS

First time he shot high; and the swashing great wave
Sent her back on a dance to the mouth of his cave.
His second fell short: 't was a booster behind
And scooted her for'ard, quite well to our mind.

(*Chorus*)

Never fear for your ship if you handle her right;
She will scamper all day and eats nothing at night.
Stick her nose in the sand, she is safe in the stall;
She 's a carriage and horses and stable and all.

CIRCE

Our friend Glaucus would usurp the role of his captain, apparently, when he celebrates that famous scene, Ulysses.

ULYSSES

And right welcome is he to any glory he may borrow therefrom. Verily there was little enough for me to boast of in the adventure.

GLAUCUS

It 's true the commander got us into the scrape, madam, if he will allow me; but there would need a longer song than any we have sung yet to tell the whole story, how cleverly he got us out of it.

THERON

Damme! a great song! Not a word about the tipple that did it all!

ELPENOR

And the sheep-ride too.

A VOICE

Ay, ay!—'t was the tipple that did for him. Let the old sinner play blind-man's buff with his bell-wether now!

ULYSSES

Enough!
Now the cry homeward and the forward glance
Shall banish retrospect. These claim our care.
Fair winds suffice not;
Nor the good hopes by gracious friends inspired,
Where prudent counsel fails.

CIRCE

Most timely said!
Experience ends not with each wondrous hap.
Ye know not yet, good men, your several fates
Cradled beyond my island's guardian pale.
Obedience and true caution shall avail you
Not less because your course be pointed clear.
These save while they endure.—
But now our ancient welcome is exchanged
For farewell greetings. Nor indeed comes song
Amiss at such an hour.

[*She claps her hands twice and* THRATTIS *enters with her lute, standing by the sideboard. While the attention of all is thus drawn away* MYRTO *gives the sign to* EURYLOCHUS, *who slips out unobserved.*]

CIRCE

Our guests have just sung a gay song in honor of their ship, Thrattis. Perchance thou canst match it with one from thine own store.

[THRATTIS *smiles faintly and begins a slow prelude upon her instrument in a minor key.*]

ELPENOR

She knows how to make it cry.

THERON

Hush, boy ; mar not the music !

[*The girl sings slowly with irregular pauses and interludes at significant points in the recital. The music itself is marked by chromatic changes, with the last two stanzas taking on distinctly the character of a funeral march. Before that part of the performance is reached* PHILEMON *and* XENIAS, *taking advantage of the rapt attention of the company, steal out unnoticed.*]

THRATTIS

Sea-wind o'er the ripples crept ;
His cool breath my temples swept ;
Sea-wind whisper'd, as I slept
    Near to the wave.
From his caverns, hollow-toned,
Sea-wind mock'd my dream and moan'd.
In my sleep I turn'd and groan'd
    As in the grave.

Through lank grasses, swaying slow,
Peering with green eyes a-glow
Sea-wind stole and mutter'd low:
"Wake not! sleep on,
If my vision thou wouldst share:—
The split mast; the lightning's glare;
Shrouds whirl'd wildly in mid-air!
See! her helm gone,
The vessel plunges. Lo! again
Caught by the deadly hurricane,
Crackling bolt and hissing rain,
The hull spins round;
Breaks, sinks! One man breasts the tide;
Clutches spar and climbs astride;
A sea-courser seems to ride.—
Vague depths profound
With white feet the others tread;
Seek on ocean's floor their bed;
Or, to rude shores blindly led,
Full nigh they draw;
Ram-like, butt the flinty stones.
The gray sea a dirge intones,
Whilst the fat casing of their bones
Dumb fishes gnaw."

ULYSSES

[*After a pause, when the chords struck in conclusion of the song have ceased to sound*]

The maid hath not sailed the south seas in vain,
upon my soul, Circe!

GLAUCUS

By the twin gods, ye would think she came straight
from Davy Jones' locker, let out alive!

CIRCE

'T is a brief step from life to death: why then
Shall not the venturous errant fancy feign it
Thrice taken and retraced? From death to life
Were as from sleep to waking; nor, if dreams
Might linger on the skirts of such a change,
Should they unheeded pass.—

The words of CIRCE are interrupted by the entrance at the Right rear doorway of EURYLOCHUS and GRAEA bearing the rustic couch upon which the form of PHILINNA is extended as upon a bier. As they enter, GRAEA, who sustains the rear end at the head of the sleeper, swings to her right backward and the two bearers set the couch and its burden down by CIRCE'S side in full view of the company. EURYLOCHUS quickly resumes his seat among the men, while the swine-

maiden, wearing her long whip coiled as a girdle round her waist, retires to a position near the lute-girl, where the two remain standing side by side. *Mikkos*, who had sprung into the room close behind the bearers, is seized by MYRTO and tied fast with shortened chain to the spokes of her wheel. The form and features of PHILINNA are motionless as in death. She is clothed in her gauzy dress of noonday. The banqueters in profound silence gaze with horror at the apparition. CIRCE, laying hand upon her wand, faces her guests steadily with a trace of irony in her look, while a few notes of solemn music fall from the lute of THRATTIS.

ULYSSES

[*Half rising from his chair with gesture of inquiry and deprecation*]

What!—Circe? Thy Philinna?—is this death?
Forbid it, ye kind gods!

CIRCE

Philinna?—or Philinna's shade?
Ask thine own followers, great commander; ask
Pale Hecate's twin votaries!

ULYSSES

[*Who has risen to his feet and scanning the company*

perceives for the first time that not all his men are present]

Ha! what? Philemon? Xenias?—where?

EURYLOCHUS

[*Saluting*] They encountered us, sir, as we ascended hither bearing the sleeping maid. They were on their way to seize her, but when they saw themselves cheated of their prey they cried out and fled incontinently to the woods.

ULYSSES

Great Zeus! no flight shall save them! Up, Eurylochus!

[*With a stern gesture of command*]

Take Glaucus and three others of your watch; go forth; seek out, arrest the caitiffs! Put them in irons and wait for us on board!

[EURYLOCHUS *and* GLAUCUS *stand up, several other men spring to their feet as volunteers.* Mikkos *exhibits excitement, and* GRAEA *slowly uncoils the whip from her waist.* THERMIA *turns pale and cannot conceal her agitation.*]

CIRCE

[*Lifting her wand gently*] Hold, Ulysses! Hold!
Refrain; bend not thy thoughts to chains
Or cruel punishment. Are they not even now
By failure and humiliation scourged?

ULYSSES

[*To whom* EURYLOCHUS *and* GLAUCUS *are looking expectantly*]

Never! Never!

The door behind the dais opens, a golden light fills the passage-way thus revealed, and MERCURY, brilliantly arrayed as in the second scene of the play, stands forth upon the platform. His step gives no sound; and, as he extends his hands (one holding the winged wand) gently forward over the company, all the men feel the soothing influence without turning their heads to observe its source; while ULYSSES, and the others who stand, sink quietly to their seats in motionless attitude. ULYSSES slightly bows his head. The inmates of the palace are not affected like the guests; they maintain their former demeanor; but CIRCE lowers her hand with the wand to the table before her.

THE SECOND ACT

MERCURY

By the Father sent
I come this time, to loose the tangled web
Of crossing motive, Circe, in thy bowers.
He in the scales of fate the fortunes weigh'd
Of these thy mortal visitors all, thine own,
Of thy beloved nymphs; and bade me speed,
Taking my wand, wherewith for woe or weal
I seal men's eyes and, when I will, unseal.

The offending youths—already are they
Themselves in closer toils of slumber caught
Than the charm'd herb upon the maiden brought.
At my behest their living phantoms glide;
Upward or downward their blind steps I guide.

[*Without turning, the god raises his wand gently with backward movement of the hands, and in the wide opening behind him the forms of* PHILEMON *and* XENIAS *appear, standing side by side. Their eyes are closed; their features pallid in the weird light; their look is of complete unconsciousness.* THRATTIS *strikes major chords.*]

Their fault the Father pardons; and decrees
They shall be toss'd no more on billowy seas,

But to their lives' end tread the enchanted soil
Which of its bloom they plotted to despoil.

[MERCURY *sways the wand slowly from behind forward, and the two sleepers* (PHILEMON *first,* XENIAS *close behind him*) *guided by the spell pass across the dais, gliding down behind the banqueters until they reach a position between* THERMIA *and* PHILINNA'S *couch. Their footsteps give no sound; their movement is mechanical; in the place indicated they stand stiff and motionless with closed eyes.*]

MERCURY

Arise, Ulysses!

[ULYSSES *stands up; and simultaneously his men all rise silently to their feet*]

Now thy waiting bark
Swims in the darkling haven; but full soon
Eos her saffron portals will unbar
And wake the convoy breezes. Tarry not!—
Thy crew the Father's stern assignments claim;
I sign them to *march,* FORWARD! in his name.

[*The funeral march which closed the song of* THRATTIS *is played softly, and the men pass out behind* MERCURY *in single file, moving noiselessly and with*